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THE NEW YORKER

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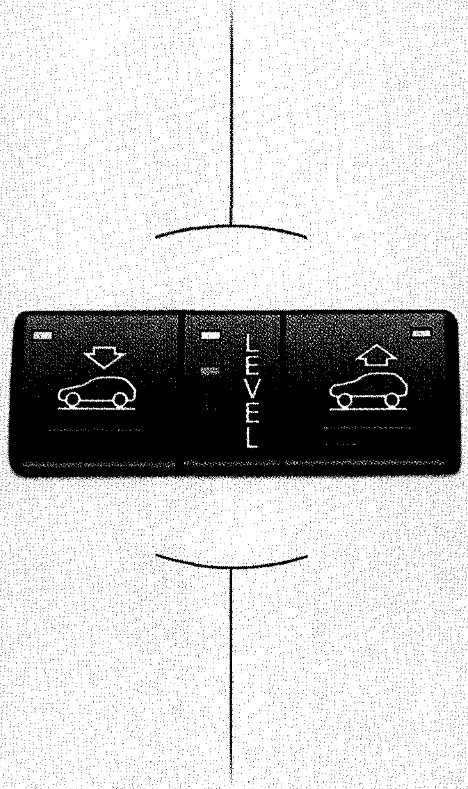

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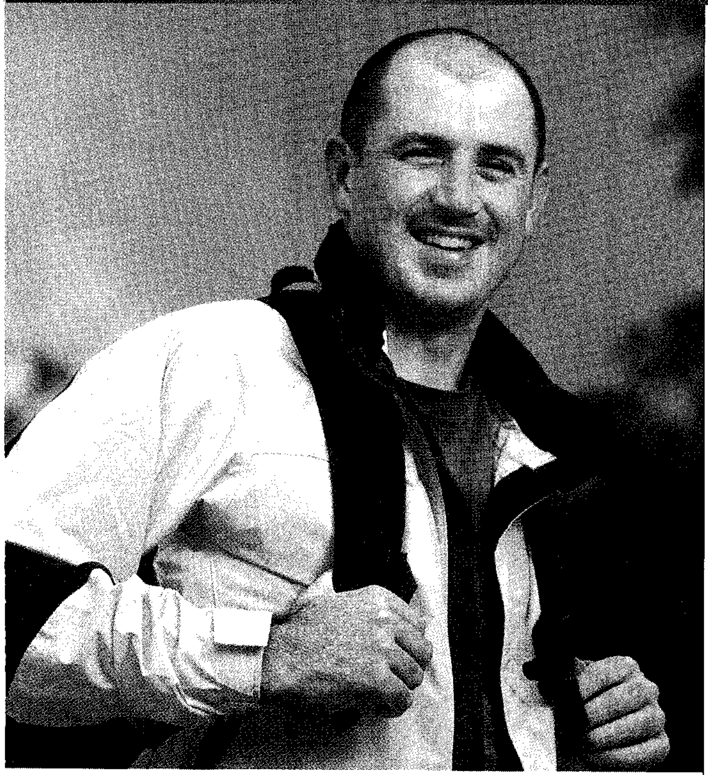

"Last year, cancer made me too weak to climb a flight of stairs. This year, I climbed Pike's Peak and loved it."

— Clay Coker

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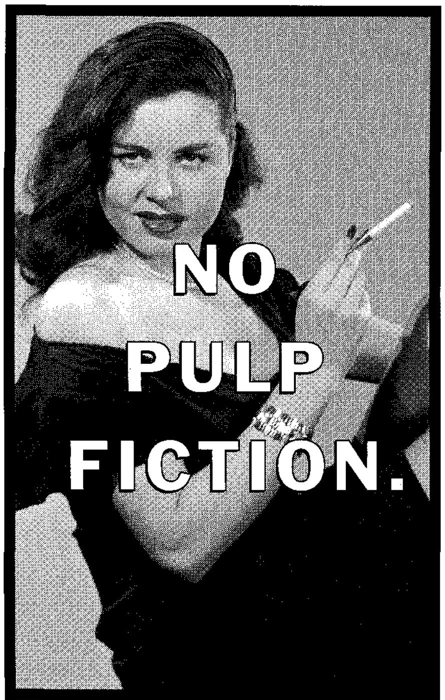

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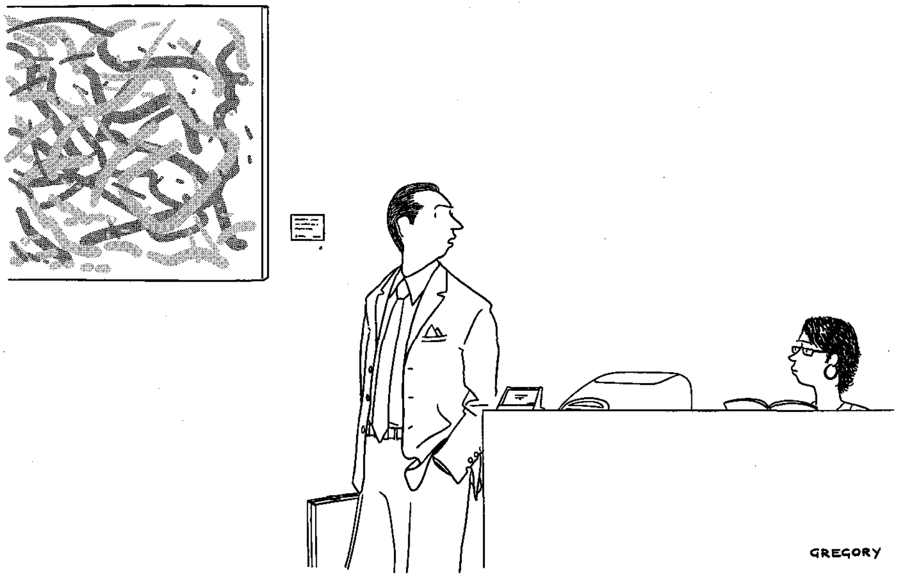

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THE MAIL

SELLING THE BLUES

Jay McInerney, in his article on Fat Possum, a blues record label, writes that in the early eighties I helped the University of Memphis "sign contracts with Junior Kimbrough and R. L. Burnside: in exchange for a dollar, Evans established a claim to some of their work on behalf of the university" ("White Man at the Door," February 4th). What McInerney doesn't say is that the university's High Water label simultaneously signed recording and songwriter contracts with these artists which specified an equitable share of royalties for them—royalties that have been, and continue to be, paid.

McInerney's article details the "stifling and fetid" homes of the Fat Possum artists, their welfare status, and their murder convictions. Does a bluesman's only dignity come from being "nihilistic" or "a psychopath," as Matthew Johnson, the head of Fat Possum, describes one artist? Fat Possum came along in the early nineties, following an exponential increase in the popularity of the blues. The company took an electric country blues sound that had been forged in the nineteen-fifties by these artists and added overlays of distortion and rock guitar (supplied by high-profile white guest artists), to appeal to an alternative and punk-rock audience. The chaos, anarchy, and nihilism that Johnson seems to find everywhere in Mississippi are actually part of the aesthetic of punk, not of the blues. Blues is a music of endurance. It has survived hard times, racism, jazz, rock, the British invasion, psychedelia, and disco. It will go on surviving. Fat Possum's manipulations are not the future path of blues. Instead, they are a detour leading to a dead end.

David Evans
Professor of Music
University of Memphis
Memphis, Tenn.

MORMON TERRITORY

Lawrence Wright captured the spirit of Mormon culture, with its elements of conservatism, mysticism, and kitsch—exemplified by the great Diet Coke debate ("The Lives of the Saints," January 21st). I only wish that he had paid more attention to the sexism that defines the practices and doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Not only is the organization run by a gerontocracy of men; Mormon teaching gives men a more important role in the "eternal Kingdom," as well as on earth. Mormon girls are taught early on that obedience is a virtue and to accept the authority of their future husbands' "priesthood" as God's will. In Sunday-school classes, we were taught the importance of being ladylike, and sang songs with lines like "When I grow up, I want to be a mother." The Church is not just different for men and women; it's for men that the Church exists.

Michelle A. Standley
New York City

Reading Wright's article, I was struck by how little Americans reflect on this country's brutal persecution of the early L.D.S. Church, and how little it moves them. Wright refers to these tragic events but spends more time on another aspect of the historical milieu from which the Church emerged—polygamy, which it disowned more than a hundred years ago. What would Wright have the Church do that it hasn't already done to distance itself from polygamy? At what point will polygamy no longer be used as a club to keep Mormons in their supposed position of moral inferiority? In a world where many segments of society approve of nontraditional sexual arrangements (gay relationships, for example), it is difficult to see America's obsession with polygamy as anything other than a way of stigmatizing contemporary Mormons.

Brad Teare
Providence, Utah

•

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NATION

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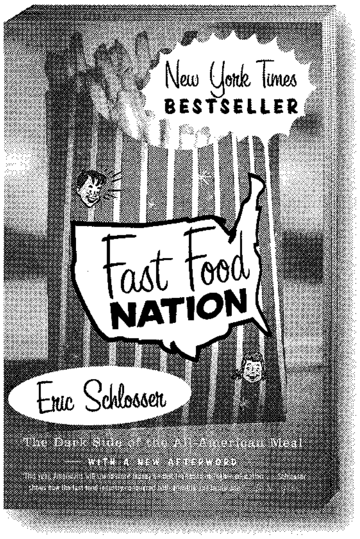
THE ALL-AMERICAN MEAL



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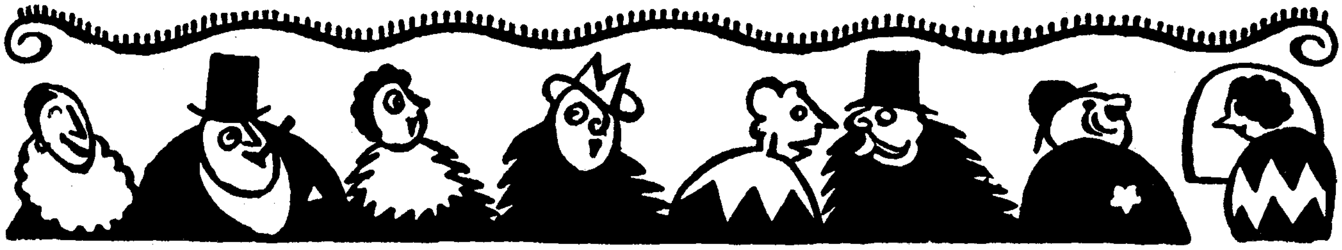

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

THE CARPETBAGGER'S CHILDREN
Jean Stapleton, Hallie Foote, and Roberta Maxwell portray three daughters of a Union soldier, in a new play by Horton Foote. Michael Wilson is the director. Previews begin March 7. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE CRUCIBLE
A revival of Arthur Miller's 1953 drama, starring Liam Neeson and Laura Linney, under the direction of Richard Eyre. Two previews on March 6. Opens March 7 at 6:30. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

FORTUNE'S FOOL
Turgenev's comedy, starring Alan Bates and Frank Langella. Arthur Penn is the director. Previews begin March 8. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

FRANNY'S WAY
In Richard Nelson's latest play, staged by Playwrights Horizons, the lives of two teen-age sisters are transformed by a trip to Greenwich Village in 1957 to visit an older married cousin. In previews. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 279-4200.)

THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA?
Bill Pullman and Mercedes Ruehl star in Edward Albee's new play, in which a celebrated architect must make a confession to his wife and son that will have ruinous effects. David Esbjornson is the director. In previews through March 9. Opens March 10 at 6. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE MASTER BUILDER
The Century Center's Ibsen series continues with the playwright's 1892 drama. In previews through March 9. Opens March 10 at 3. (111 E. 15th St. 279-4200.)

MR. GOLDWYN
Alan King takes the stage to portray the film producer Samuel Goldwyn, in a new play by Marsha Lebby and John Lollos. Gene Saks is the director. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

OKLAHOMA!
Trevor Nunn's West End production of the 1943 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical comes to Broadway. In previews. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

PRODIGAL
A young man leaves his small Australian home town for the big city, in a musical by Mathew Frank and Dean Bryant. Staged by the York Theatre Company. In previews through March 10. Opens March 12 at 8. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 239-6200.)

SMELL OF THE KILL
Michele Lowe's comedy involves three wives (Lisa Emery, Claudia Shear, and Jessica Stone), their three unloving husbands, and a meat locker. Christopher Ashley is the director. Previews begin March 7. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SURVIVING GRACE
A play by Trish Vradenburg, about a fraught mother-and-daughter relationship. Illeana Douglas and Doris Belack star. Jack Hofsiss directs. In previews. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-7171.)

SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS
John Lithgow is the gossip columnist J. J. Hunsecker, in a musical version of the 1957 film, with a book by John Guare, music by Marvin Hamlisch, and lyrics by Craig Carnelia. Nicholas Hytner is the director. In previews. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THROW PITCHFORK
A one-man show by Alexander Thomas, in which he explores growing up black in a family with three brothers and an alcoholic father. In previews through March 11. Opens March 12 at 7:30. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG
The Public Theatre's production of Suzan-Lori Parks's play has moved to Broadway, starring Jeffrey Wright and Mos Def. George C. Wolfe is the director. Previews begin March 12. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AN ALMOST HOLY PICTURE
In Heather McDonald's limpid, well-written monologue, a meditation on the nature of faith, Samuel Gentle (the appealing Kevin Bacon), a lapsed priest turned groundskeeper for the Church of the Holy Comforter, waits, prays, serves, plants his patch, and dutifully tries to live in a sacramental way for a God who seems, if not dead, at least comatose. Following the traditional Romantic trajectory, Samuel, instead of finding comfort in God, manages to find the miraculous in ordinary life. The kinds of questions about darkness and light and revelation that McDonald's play raises can't be found on CNN, which is the evening's asset. But the play's incidents are narrated, not dramatized, and that is its limitation. No amount of outstanding talent—neither Michael Mayer's sensitive direction nor the striking scenic design of Mark Wendland, which turns Samuel's garden into a combination of Beckett's "Happy Days" and Gethsemane—can disguise the fact that we're looking at a talking head. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/18 & 25/02.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300. Closes March 31.)

BEA ARTHUR ON BROADWAY:
JUST BETWEEN FRIENDS
The stage and screen star performs songs and reminisces about her six-decade career, accompanied by the pianist Billy Goldenberg. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes March 24.)

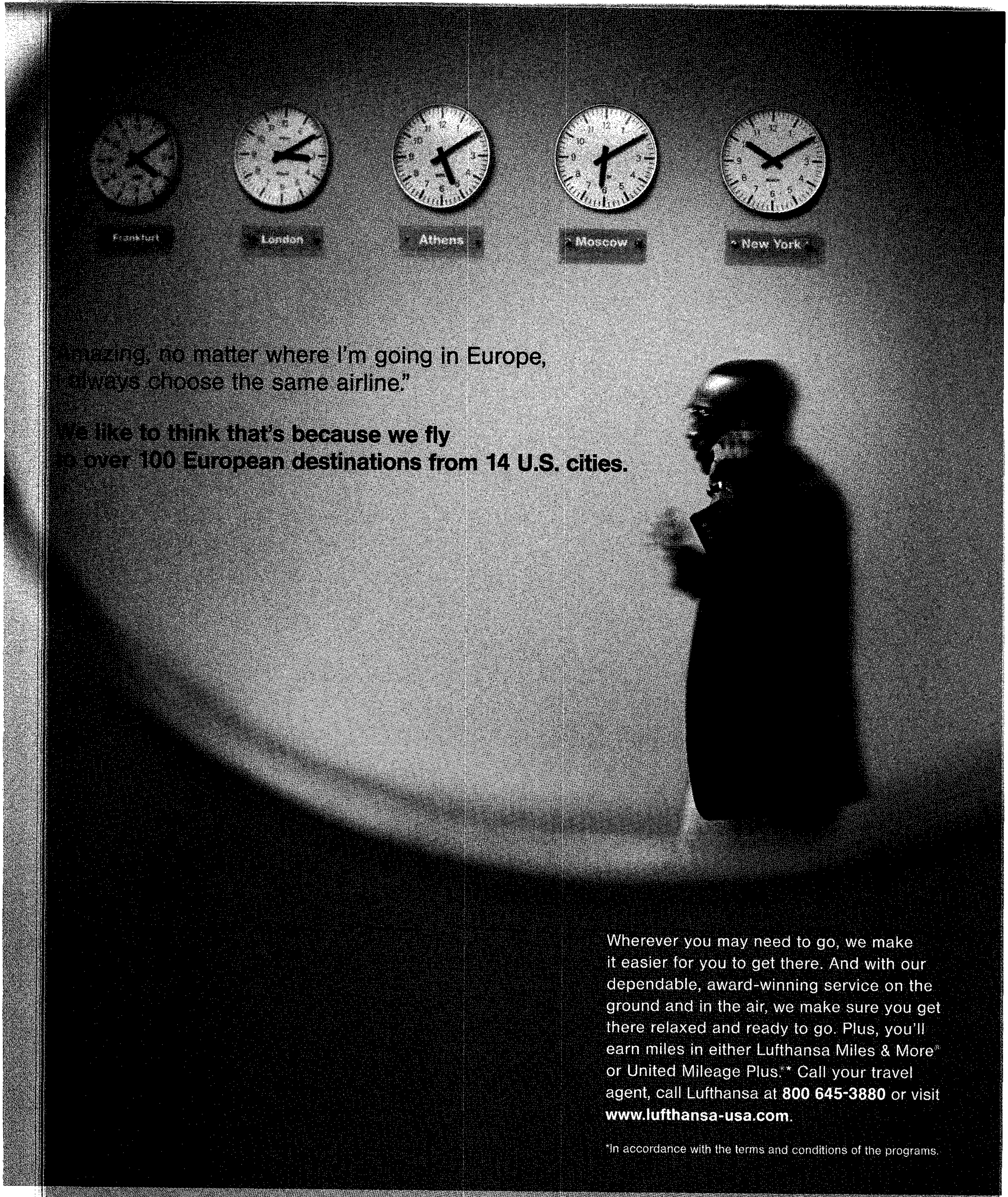
THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Three actors perform thirty-seven plays and a hundred and fifty-four sonnets in under two hours. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

CYMBELINE
Mark Rylance and five other actors take on all (close to thirty) of the roles in Shakespeare's play, in a staging by Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Closes March 17.)

THE DAZZLE
Peter Frechette and Reg Rogers portray the Collyer brothers, in a new play by Richard Greenberg. David Warren is the director. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

DRUMMER WANTED
An encore production of Richard Maxwell's latest play, in which a percussionist, who lives at home with his mother and has recently been hit by a car, ponders the possibility of financial compensation for his injuries. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 239-1105. Closes March 17.)

ELAINE STRITCH AT LIBERTY
In her extraordinary one-woman show (co-created with *The New Yorker's* theatre critic John Lahr)—which has moved to Broadway, the star's natural habitat—Stritchie, as Noel Coward called her, once and for all confirms her status as a living legend. She sings songs and tells tales about the ups and downs of her long life in the theatre (her first break, as Ethel Merman's understudy in "Call Me Madam," her iconic turn in Stephen Sondheim's "Company," her struggles with booze and with love). But terrific songs, hilarious gossip, and intimate confessions aside, Stritch, with her inimitable voice and uncanny timing, ends up capturing more than a single lifetime. Instead her show is the synthesis of so much that is rich and rewarding and



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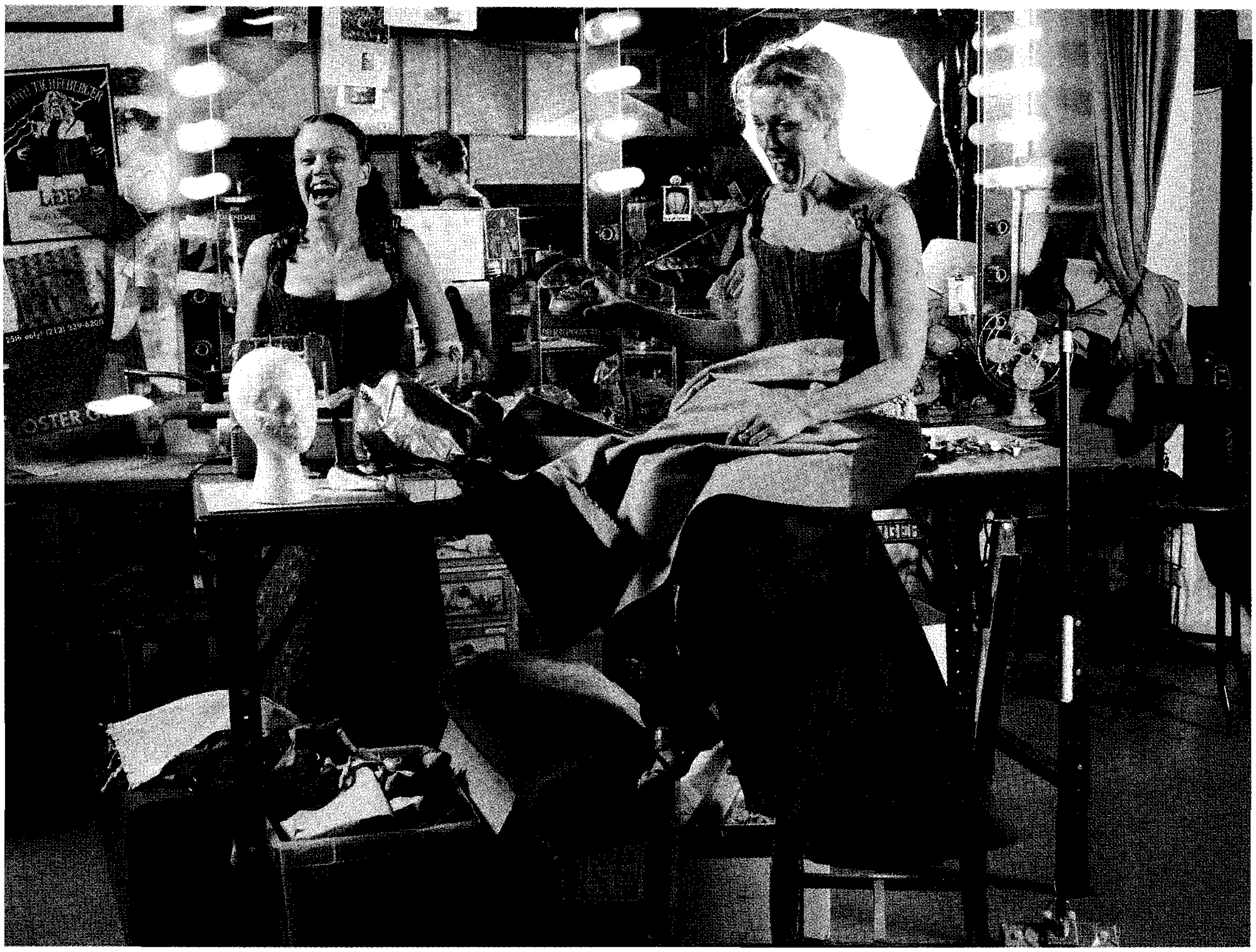

Kate Valk and Frances McDormand, who lead the cast in the Wooster Group's "To You, the Birdie! (Phèdre)."

heartbreaking about life on the stage. George C. Wolfe is the director. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

FOOL FOR LOVE
Tim Corcoran's precise, insightful direction is the heart of this revival of Sam Shepard's 1984 play about a misbegotten love whose origins make it all the more powerful. The play is a searing illustration of the extremes we'll go to for the sake of love and the stories we tell ourselves to make it make sense. Mr. Corcoran is particularly good at choreographing the loaded silences and flashes of physical passion that run through one couple's evening-long explication of their history. Though there is unfortunately little chemistry between the two leads, the evening's power lies mainly in the monologues, and those are superb. Steve Payne, as the man who sets the story in motion, creates a compelling mix of loner denial and undeniable charm. (29th Street Rep, 212 W. 29th St. 206-1515. Closes March 30.)

FOUR
The twenty-six-year-old Christopher Shinn's drama, written when he was twenty-three, doesn't just show promise beyond the playwright's years. With its stark immediacy, it outshines many other new plays being produced today. The action is set on a single day—the Fourth of July in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1996—and follows four wounded but resilient characters, whose lives are intertwined in ways they don't know: a bisexual black English teacher (Isiah Whitlock, Jr.), his smart, emotionally overburdened daughter (Pascale Armand), her macho-sweet Latino admirer (Armando Riesco), and a shy gay high-school student who can no longer bear the closet (Keith Nobbs). The cast is wonderful; under Jeff Cohen's direction, they tap into the confusion and bravery of people taking tentative steps toward the kinds of human connections their circumstances have made them yearn for. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

FURTHER THAN THE FURTHEST THING
Zinnie Harris's play, which is set partly on the real and remote South Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha and partly in England, takes an imaginative leap into and beyond history. It is 1961, and a volcanic eruption forces the evacuation of all the islanders, wresting them away from their world of black sand and crawfish and penguins and plunging them into factory life and damp employee housing. But the play is not a romanticization of a paradise lost—there is a tragedy in the island's past, and it still lodges in the lives of an older couple (Robert Hogan and Jenny Sterlin) and the nephew they raised (Dan Futterman). In their relationship to the island and to their current circumstances, they are psychically caught between a rock and a hard place. The cast, under the direction of Neil Pepe, also includes Jennifer Dundas and Peter Gerety. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes March 31.)

THE GUYS
In Anne Nelson's play, an editor (Susan Sarandon) helps a fire chief (Anthony LaPaglia) write eulogies for the funerals of eight of his men killed in the September 11th attacks. Jim Simpson is the director. (The Flea, 41 White St. 226-2407. Closes March 14.)

THE HAMLET PROJECT
A hip-hop version of Shakespeare's play, by William Electric Black. March 8-9 at 8 and March 10 at 2:30 and 8. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

THE LAST FIVE YEARS
A new musical by Jason Robert Brown ("Parade"), which traces the relationship between a successful young novelist (Norbert Leo Butz) and a struggling actress (Sherie René Scott). Daisy Prince is the director. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

LOVESEATS FOR VIRGINIA WOOLF
Randy Gener's play about Virginia Woolf's friendships. (A: D/B Project Space, 116 S. Portland Ave., Brooklyn. 718-855-9394. Closes March 16.)

MAMMA MIA!
This smorgasbord of song, the brainchild of Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, the male half of the seventies supergroup ABBA, is nothing but hokum—a chucklehead pleasure. Catherine Johnson's book, which is simply a slick cartoon, connects the dots between the band's No. 1 singles. (11/5/01) (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.)

MARIA DEL BOSCO
(SEX & RACING CARS: A SOUND OPERA)
The avant-garde playwright Richard Foreman's fiftieth play. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

THE MATCHMAKER
Anna Manahan and Des Keogh portray twenty different characters, in John B. Keane's play, set in rural western Ireland in the nineteen-fifties. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes March 31.)

METAMORPHOSES
Mary Zimmerman's contemporary adaptation of several of Ovid's myths moves to Broadway, having opened at Second Stage last fall. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

NECESSARY TARGETS
In Eve Ensler's new drama, a Park Avenue psychiatrist and an ambitious young writer travel to Bosnia to help women refugees deal with their memories of war. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

NOISES OFF
Jeremy Sams's revival of Michael Frayn's 1982 backstage comedy, a farce within an antic farce, is

KATHARINA BOSSE

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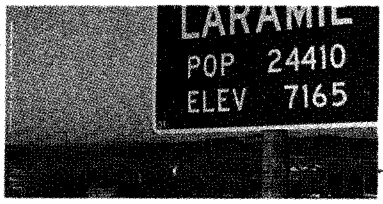

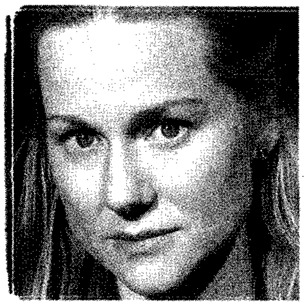

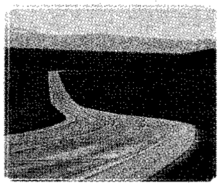

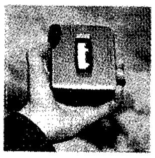

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CASTING BY ANN GOULDER MUSIC SUPERVISOR ALEX STEYERMARK MUSIC BY PETER GOLUB EDITOR BRIAN A. KATES PRODUCTION DESIGNER DAN LEIGH DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY TERRY STACEY CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS PETER CANE ROY GABAY PRODUCED BY DECLAN BALDWIN
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ROSS KATZ ANNE CAREY TED HOPE BASED ON THE PLAY BY MOISÉS KAUFMAN AND THE MEMBERS OF TECTONIC THEATER PROJECT WRITTEN BY MOISÉS KAUFMAN AND THE MEMBERS OF TECTONIC THEATER PROJECT DIRECTED BY MOISÉS KAUFMAN

HBO FILMS

GM GOOD MACHINE

PREMIERES SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 8PM/7C

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blissful fun. As the dysfunctional troupe of the travelling show "Nothing On," all the members of the excellent cast shine in roles that lesser comedians would surely find daunting. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

ONE MAN

The British actor Steven Berkoff directs himself in three monologues, two of which he also wrote; the third is an adaptation of Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." Mr. Berkoff is astoundingly versatile in voice and mien. In a piece about the life of an actor he is particularly incisive and funny—and, in the end, poignant—as he represents everyone from the actor's parents to a series of casting agents to Hamlet. Occasionally Mr. Berkoff is tiresomely self-indulgent, letting himself riff on, say, his own sound effects or his ability to mime climbing stairs for far longer than he should, in a way that doesn't serve the story or the audience. Still, even though he would have been better off with another director, Mr. Berkoff the actor and writer displays a rare, exciting verve. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 253-9983. Closes March 10.)

ONE MO' TIME

A revival of Vernel Bagneris's 1979 musical, which is set on a summer night in 1926 in New Orleans at the Lyric Theatre, where such stars as Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey once performed. Mr. Bagneris again stars and directs. (Longacre, 200 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The fiddler Martin Hayes and the guitarist Dennis Cahill in concert this week.

PERMANENT VISITOR

A two-month festival of plays about or by Dawn Powell, or based on her works. (78th Street Theatre, 236 W. 78th St. 206-1515. Closes March 9.)

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS

It's one thing for a man to develop the ability to stretch his scrotum until it's the size of a dinner plate, but another to share this talent with the world. These two Australians, Simon Morley and David (Friendy) Friend, profess embarrassment at the success of their "little pub show," but it's still a con: fifteen minutes into their act they are utterly naked and out of ideas. They can't go on, but they do. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

QED

Peter Parnell's play, starring Alan Alda as the physicist Richard Feynman, buzzes with life—a fitting quality for a play about a man who was living proof of the idea that "everything is interesting if you look at it deeply enough." Set in 1986—the year of the Challenger explosion, whose causes Feynman helped to investigate—"QED" (the title comes from the theory of quantum electrodynamics, for which Feynman won the Nobel Prize, in 1965) takes us through an afternoon and evening in Feynman's office at Caltech, where he talks about such subjects as photons, drumming, the Manhattan Project, cancer, and "South Pacific." Alda's performance, which makes much use of that scrunchy-eyed smile of his, is one of utter charm. Directed by Gordon Davidson, and also with Kellie Overbey as one of Feynman's students. Sundays and Mondays only. (11/26/01) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

TO YOU, THE BIRDIE! (PHÈDRE)

Frances McDormand, Kate Valk, and Willem Dafoe lead the cast in the Wooster Group's latest work, based on Racine's "Phèdre." (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St. Brooklyn. 966-3651.)

URINETOWN

The amount of fun to be had at this musical, by Greg Kotis (book and lyrics) and Mark Hollmann (music and lyrics), is in direct proportion to the unpleasantness of its title. Its central idea is that an evil corporation controls all the toilets in a city that bears some resemblance to New York, but the show is really no more and no less than a terrifically spirited sendup of musicals and their conventions, as self-conscious and gag-happy as a Warner Bros. cartoon. (10/1/01) (Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA

Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES

Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET

Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CHICAGO

Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT

Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.

42ND STREET

Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

THE FULL MONTY

Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING

New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LOVE, JANIS

Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES

Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS

St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

PROOF

Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.

RENT

Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

THE SYRINGA TREE

Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE

Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING

St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES

Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY

March 5 at 8 and March 9 at 2: "The Sorcerer's Sofa," "White Roses Duet," "The Word," and "Cloven Kingdom." ♦ March 6 and March 8 at 8 and March 10 at 7:30: "Arden Court," "Counterswarm," and "Black Tuesday." ♦ March 7 and March 9 at 8 and March 10 at 3: "Dandelion Wine," "Antique Valentine," and "Speaking in Tongues." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

BALLET FLORIDA

The company comes north from West Palm Beach for its New York début, bringing works by William Forsythe, Daniel Ezralow, and Mauricio Wainrot. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. March 5-8 at 8, March 9 at 2 and 8, and March 10 at 2 and 7:30.)

"BYRD-LESQUE"

The choreographer Donald Byrd presents a child-friendly mini-retrospective of his works, in seventy-five minutes, with excerpts from such pieces as "Not the Shack," "Folk Dance," and "Drastic Cuts." (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St., near Broadway. 239-6200. March 7-8 at 7, March 9 at 2 and 7, and March 10 at noon and 5. Through March 17.)

GANJIRO NAKAMURA III

The seventy-year-old, third-generation Kabuki dancer presents "Fuji Musume," the tale of a beautiful young maiden (Nakamura III) jilted by her deceitful lover (his son, Nakamura IV). The Columbia professor Donald Keene introduces the work and provides a background on Nakamura's career. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 752-3015. March 7 at 8.)

"THE NIGHT A METEOR FELL THROUGH MY ROOF"

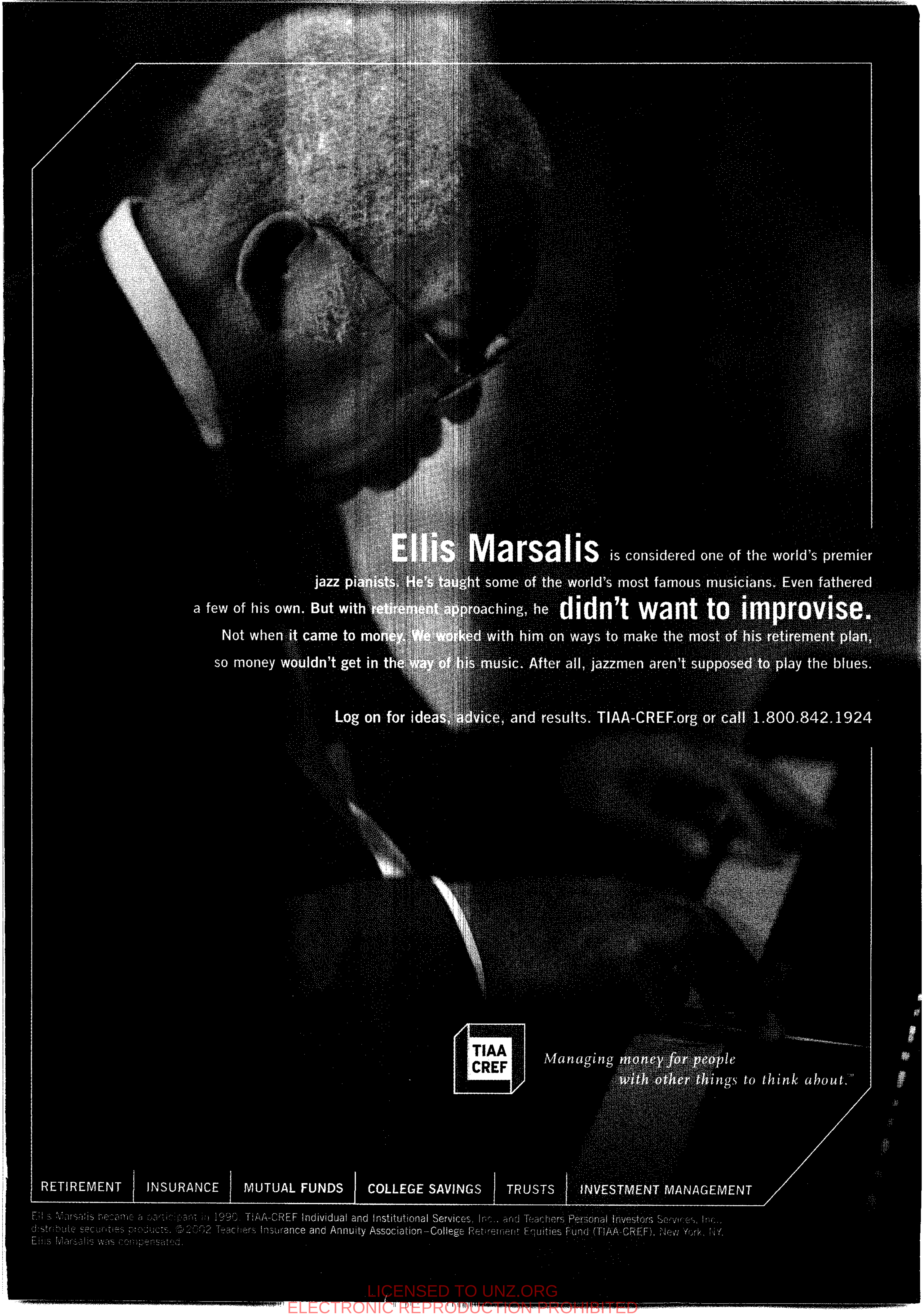
The choreographer Kate Gyllenhaal wanted to create a dance that made a snapshot-style record of "those moments when you turn a corner." So she asked her family, friends, and friends of friends to tell her their most embarrassing, happiest, or most regrettable moments. Their answers, which serve as the soundtrack for this evening-length collage of duets, solos, and group pieces and which inspired all its physical tics (the rubbing of eyes, the hand over heart, the propping up of the lower back), were "pretty simple," she says. "The big moments were: birth, death, love, loss." (Dixon Place, 309 E. 26th St., near Second Ave. 532-1546. March 7 at 8. Through March 14.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

MARY CLEERE HARAN / FRED HO'S MONKEY ORCHESTRA

In one of the least likely couplings on a New York stage in some time, the urbane cabaret singer Haran, a one-woman compendium of classic songs from the nineteen-thirties and forties, splits the bill with Ho's Monkey Orchestra, an Asian-influenced band that deconstructs conventional jazz genres behind the baritone-saxophone musings of its Marxist-leaning leader. The audience mix alone will be worth the price of admission. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 279-4200. March 7 at 7:30.)

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE



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"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
It's hard to remember a time when the pianist, educator, and all-purpose jazz spokesman **Billy Taylor** hasn't been around. Saluting him as he turns eighty are a host of guests including two star soloists from the Count Basie band—the saxophonist **Frank Wess** and the trombonist **Benny Powell**—along with such younger musicians as the guitarist **Russell Malone** and the pianist **Benny Green,** who will join Taylor's adroit trio. The vocalist **Carol Sloane** will also be on hand. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. March 7 at 8.)

ABBEY LINCOLN
This indomitable performer, whose welcome resurgence in the early nineties alerted a whole new generation to what heartfelt jazz vocalizing was all about, enjoys a career retrospective studded with guest stars. The saxophonist **Joe Lovano** appears on the first night; the provocative alto master **Steve Coleman,** a former Lincoln sideman, comes in the following evening; and the final night finds the singer **Freddy Cole,** the pianist **Marc Cary,** and the dancer **Savion Glover** onstage to applaud this ageless doyenne. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. March 7-9 at 8.)

"SEVENTIES SOUL JAM"
A night of music made for nostalgia, featuring the Stylistics ("You Make Me Feel Brand New"), the Chi-Lites ("Have You Seen Her?"), the Delfonics ("La La Means I Love You"), and the Main Ingredient ("Everybody Plays the Fool"), which is led by the vocalist Cuba Gooding, father of the well-known actor. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. March 9 at 7:30.)

RATDOG
Formed by the Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir and the bassist Rob Wasserman shortly before Jerry Garcia's death, in 1995, this jam-band mainstay brings solace to both graying rockers and disenfranchised hippie undergraduates. The eclectic sets are full of everything from down-home blues to classic psychedelic rock, and the scratch compositions of DJ Logic give the show a twenty-first-century element. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 307-7171. March 9 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
March 9 at 8: The **Ghazal Ensemble,** featuring the Tehranian *kamancheh* (spike fiddle) player Kayhan Kalhor and the Indian sitarist Shujaat Husain Khan, fuses the entrancing improvisational traditions of Persian and Indian music. A benefit performance for the Institute. (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St.) ♦ March 10 at 7: **Martin Hayes** and **Dennis Cahill** offer an early St. Patrick's Day celebration of Celtic musical culture. County Clare, Ireland, is both Hayes's birthplace and a source of inspiration for the accomplished fiddler. He and Cahill, his longtime guitar-playing accompanist, unearth tunes that are a far cry from stereotypical jigs and reels. The lyrical songs are stripped down and as welcome as a slow saunter down a country lane. But Hayes occasionally breaks into a brisk run, and when he gets wound up onstage, with his arm furiously bowing and his long locks flying about his head, you might think it's the very banshee he's fleeing. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St.) For more information about all shows, call 545-7536.

LEROY THOMAS AND THE ZYDECO ROADRUNNERS
The Louisiana-based bandleader Thomas keeps his shows lively. He's known for spinning his accordion in the air and for his sense of humor. Witness the title track of his 2000 CD, "Monkey & the Baboon," which goes like this: "Well the monkey and the baboon playing in the grass / Monkey told the baboon you kiss too fast / Baboon say no this cannot be / And the monkey say, baby, you're killing me." (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, between 12th and 13th Sts. For more information, call 685-7597. March 10 at 7:30.)

BAD RELIGION
One of the longest-running bands to come out of the California hardcore scene of the nineteen-eighties, Bad Religion has been cited as a major influence on such relative newcomers as Green Day, the Offspring, and Blink-182. Unlike those upstarts, however, the band never really broke big. Now back on its own indie label, Epitaph, which was founded by the guitarist Brett Gurewitz, the band is touring in support of its thirteenth album of propulsive yet melodic punk rock, "The Process of Belief." With **Less Than Jake.** (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. March 12 at 7:30.)

GEORGE SHEARING / DICK HYMAN
The well-paired pianists, who between them can survey the entire history of jazz piano (and don't have to be asked twice to do so), banter and play with geniality and ease. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. March 12 at 8.)

THE WALTER THOMPSON ORCHESTRA
The innovative bandleader Thompson employs his Sound Painting System, a means of structured improvisation governed by some seven-hundred gestures, to create discordantly adventurous music. Only for those with open minds. (Here Theatre, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. March 12 at 8:30. Through March 29.)

CLUBS

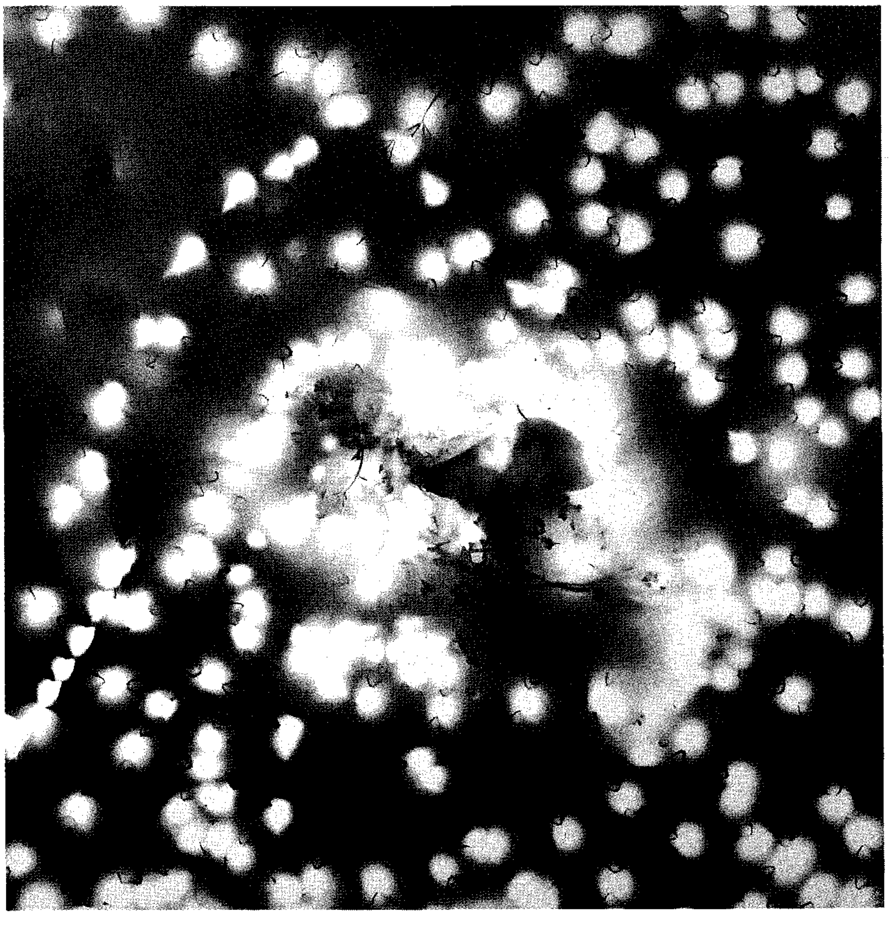
Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

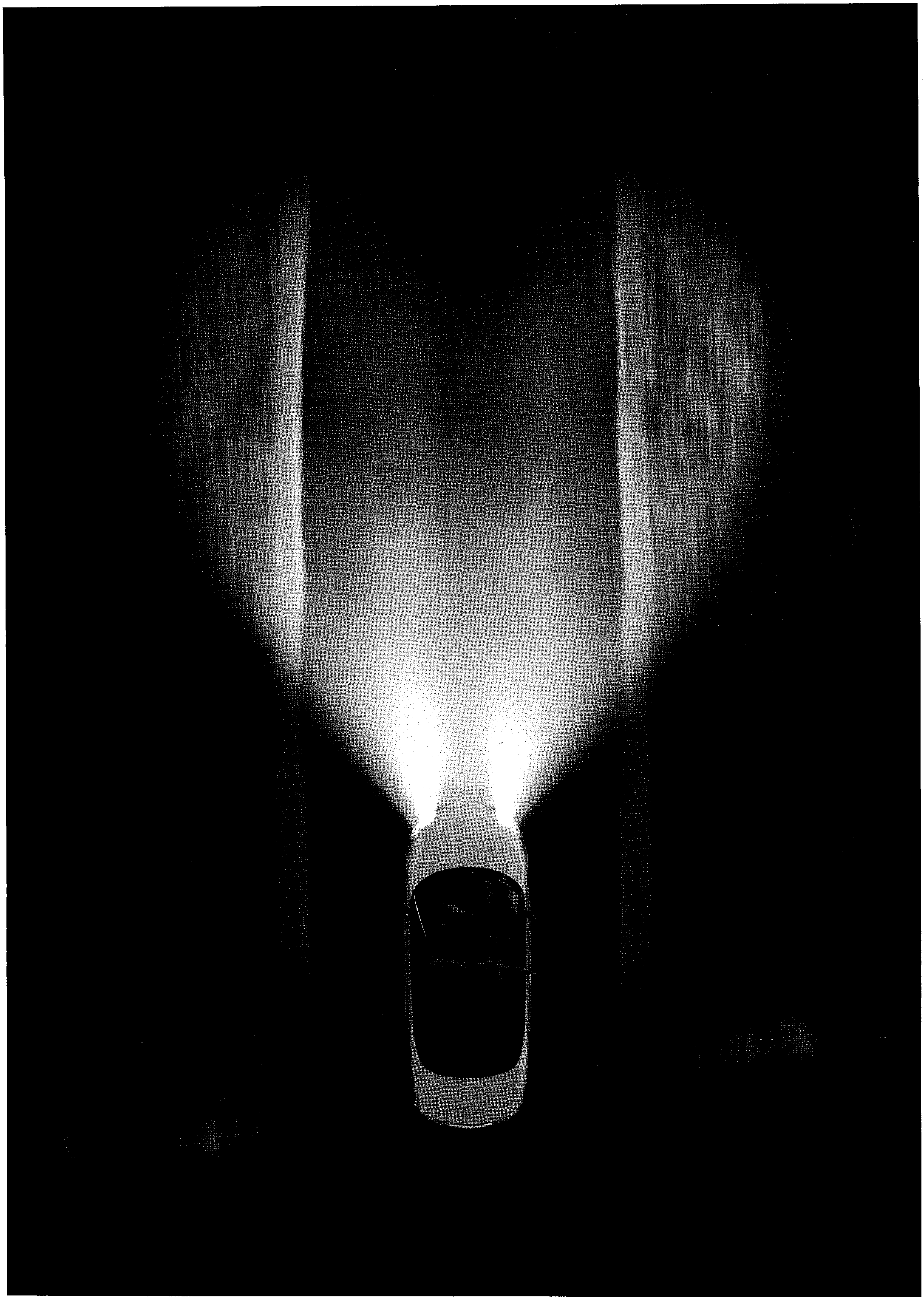
B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—March 8-9: As notorious for his checkered past (crack addiction, prison time) as he is for his libidinous grooves ("Super Freak," "Mary Jane," "You and I"), **Rick James** dedicated himself to hedonism and created some of the more memorable funk staples of the late twentieth century. March 10: "Black 2 Broadway" is a new monthly event featuring African-American stars of the Great White Way who are currently not in a show. With such talent as **Savion Glover, Lilias White, Billy Porter,** and **Darius de Haas** lined up for the opening night, it holds great promise. March 11-12: Good times with the seminal disco innovators **Nile Rodgers and Chic.**

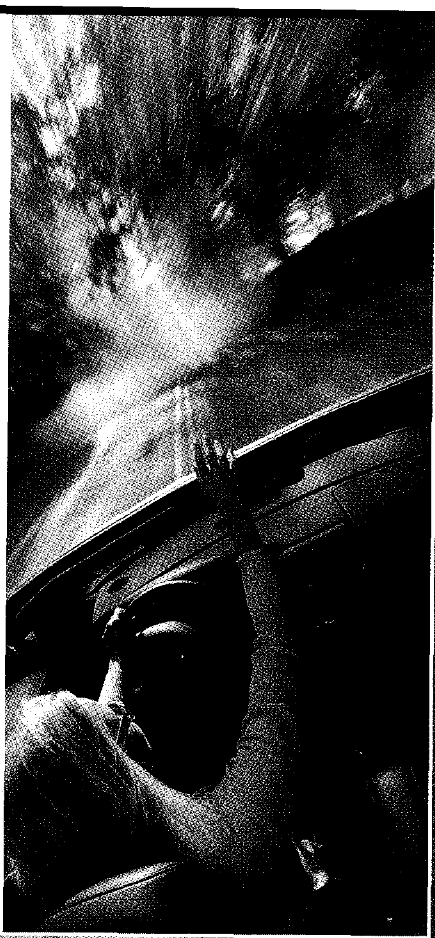
BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—March 6: England's latest export, **Elbow** plays sincere and expansive pop full of drawn-out vocals and tortured lyrics. Their début album, "Asleep in the Back," tackles the popular themes of small-town desperation and substance abuse. Like their fellow-Mancunians the Doves, and the popular Coldplay, they're earnest enough for MTV, but sufficiently talented to command attention. Sharing the bill is **South.** This trio of young multi-instrumentalists from London took its name in reaction to the prominence of bands from the northern points of the United Kingdom (see Elbow's influences, above). Their sound is earthy and soulful—a cross between a contemporary U.K. guitar band and Neil Young in his "Harvest" phase. March 7-8: The revved-up pop and chanteys of **Great Big Sea.** March 11-12: The volatile Texan combo **And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead** matches the sinister flamboyance of its moniker with performances often punctuated by end-of-set violence. While one might crassly suggest that the Who's Pete Townshend was doing this years before these little punks were born, the band has still managed to capture the imagination of a new generation of excitement-starved rock fans.

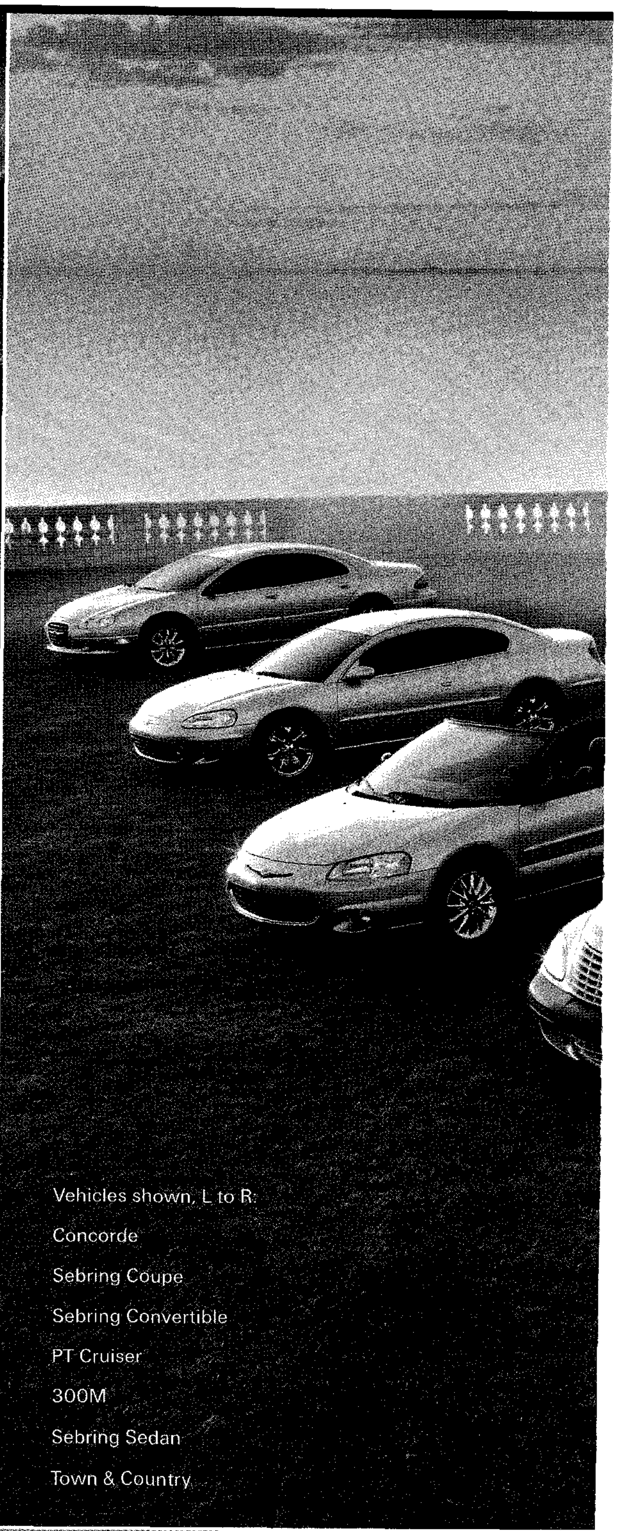
FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—March 9: **Saint Low,** the band formed by former Madder Rose vocalist Mary Lorson, specializes in dark and enchanting songs. On its new album, "Tricks for Dawn," French horns, violins, cellos, and Lorson's soft voice weave a veil of warm melancholy. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—March 8: **Cracker** returns with songs from its new album, "Forever." The sound may be somewhat stale, but the ferociously charismatic front man David Lowery and the fiery guitarist Johnny Hickman can still deliver a worthy Southern-boogie blowout.


"Being 2000," by Michael Flomen, at Ricco/Maresca (see Photography).







Vehicles shown, L to R:

Concorde

Sebring Coupe

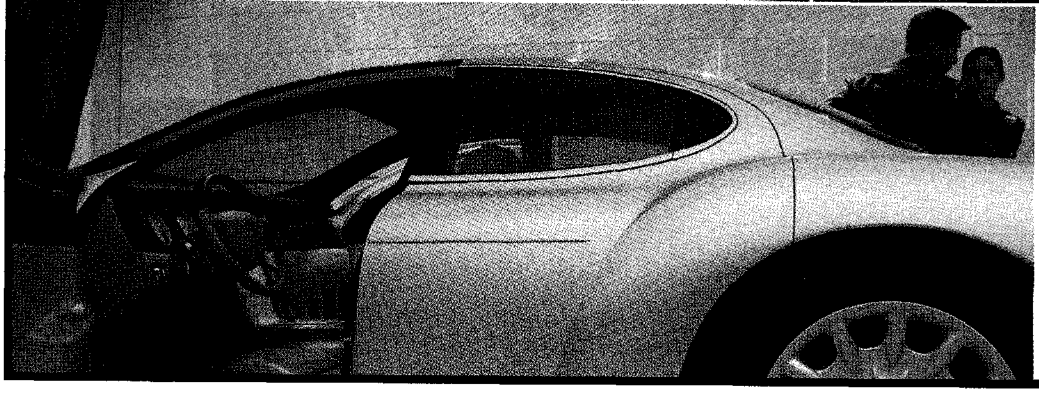
Sebring Convertible

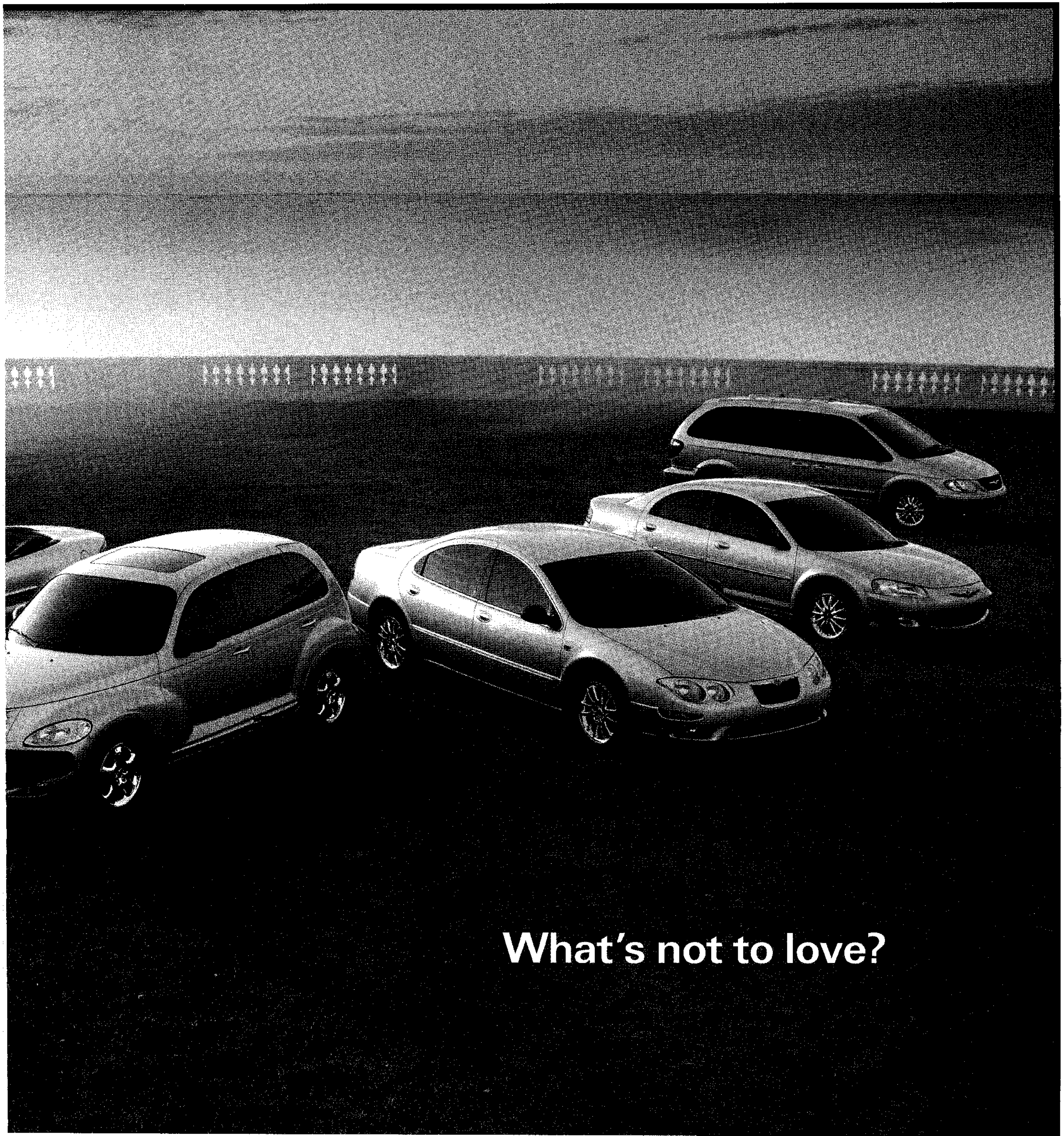
PT Cruiser

300M

Sebring Sedan

Town & Country





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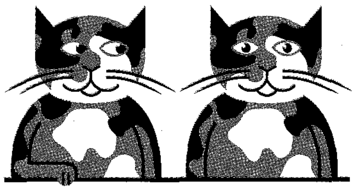
BOOK CURRENTS

Imitations of Life

A Scottish sheep is all very well, but with the recent announcement that a cute kitten had been cloned by the cutely named Genetic Savings & Clone company, biotechnology acquired its first credible mascot. It's the sort of media event that probably appalls Francis Fukuyama, though in **OUR POSTHUMAN FUTURE: CONSEQUENCES OF THE BIOTECHNOLOGY REVOLUTION** (forthcoming from Farrar, Straus & Giroux) it isn't cats he's worried about but us. Fukuyama carefully deflates the most extreme claims of both advocates and scaremongers while passionately insisting that governments need to develop coherent regulation policies for new biotechnologies. The freewheeling way in which neuropharmaceuticals like Ritalin have been prescribed during the last decade, for example, does not make him optimistic. And the stakes are getting higher: "The Law of Unintended Consequences would apply here in spades."



NIGEL HOLMES

Peter J. Bentley's **DIGITAL BIOLOGY** (Simon & Schuster) is interested not in what technology is doing to nature but in what nature is doing to technology. A computer scientist, Bentley works on what is commonly called artificial intelligence, and insists that it is, in fact, real intelligence. Already many computer programs use "genetic algorithms" to devise their own solutions to problems and to design further computer programs. Some highly advanced ones now store data not in microchips but in synthetic strands of DNA. And by creating digital biologies we may learn more about how biology around and within us operates, so that computers would examine our cells for viruses and suggest appropriate cures. Whether, having established a biology of technology, the intelligent machines will be able to go further and make a biotechnology of technology isn't yet clear. For now, Bentley's most pressing task must surely be to produce a computer that thinks like a kitten.

—*Leo Carey*

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—March 9: The **Heroine Sheiks**, the raucous and wildly fun homespun combo led by the unpredictably antic singer Shannon Selberg (who occasionally blows a bugle). The band's sound—dark, heavy, and extremely tight—is augmented by angular rhythms and the punishing, exquisite riffs of the legendary ex-Swans guitarist Norman Westberg. March 12: Foremost among the new crop of streetwise hip-hop groups is New York's **Cannibal Ox.** Produced by underground-rap lodestar El-P, last year's album "The Cold Vein" married dark samples and off-kilter beats with unforgivingly inventive lyrics.

RODEO BAR
375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—March 8. The guitarist and singer **Johnny Dowd** didn't release his first record until he was in his fifth decade. Since 1998's "The Wrong Side of Memphis," though, he has quickly assembled a tough, original, and distinctive body of work. Dowd's songs, like Poe's stories, paint portraits of men on the edge of madness; they are populated by blasted veterans, obsessive lovers, and stone-cold killers.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—March 9: **NRBQ** puts on shows that are unequal (and unbalanced) parts Thelonious Monk, Chuck Berry, and Ricky Ricardo.

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-5252)—March 10: Taking their name from a pun on the catchphrase of Dr. Martens boots (the hallmark of any credible punk wardrobe), New Jersey's **Bouncing Souls** typify the past decade's pop-punk/ska-revival movement.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through March 10: The trombone is such a staple of the salsa sound that its place in the front line seems obvious. Not so. It took pioneers such as the bandleader and composer **Willie Colón** to establish the horn as an integral element of the music. Colon, himself a trombonist, also introduced the notable singers Hector Lavoe and Ruben Blades and continues to lead a fervent Latin unit long on orchestral heft and dashing rhythm.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through March 23, the vocalist **David Campbell.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through March 16: You loved him in "Barney Miller," but did you know that **Hal Linden** won a Tony Award for the 1974 Broadway musical "The Rothschilds" before he took on the role of the endearing police captain? Returning to the musical stage, Linden presents favorite stage tunes that will restore memories of his earlier triumphs.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—No longer the new kid on the block with the magic fingers, the pianist **Cyrus Chestnut** (here with his trio through March 10) has, over the course of a decade, transformed himself into a vital element of the New York City jazz scene. The flying digits are still in grand shape, as is Chestnut's sense of pithy melody. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—March 8-9: The **Benny Golson** quartet. The tenor saxophonist Golson, with his brawny tone, full-throttle energy, and impeccable credentials (the Jazztet, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers), is a genuine hard-bop hero. He's also one of the greatest of jazz composers, with at least three classics to his name: "I Remember Clifford," "Whisper Not," and "Stablemates."

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through March 17: A two-week run at the Vanguard, reserved for a handful of artists a year, is an honor to be cherished. A fortnight with trumpeter **Roy Hargrove** and his seasoned quintet promises a steady stream of hard-bop plentitude and warming solos from a player who finds continued sustenance in a genre that peaked a full decade before his birth. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Surrealism: Desire Unbound"** is a big, fairly resistible show, with scattered delights, that labors to pump up the long-deflated blimp of Surrealism with a panting emphasis on sex. There's fine work by Picasso, Miró, and Giacometti, but the more orthodox dream illustrations of Dali, Ernst, and so on look more tired than ever. The show's strong suits are erotic photography and drawing; its man of the hour is Hans Bellmer, the weird German whose indelibly shocking photos of anatomically preposterous female dolls are back in vogue these days. Masses of often racy books, documents, and ephemera generate coolly libidinous chic along with a certain prurient air. Imagine a Starr Report issued by a committee of fallen librarians. On the plus side, no show that interrelates Man Ray, Frida Kahlo, and Jackson Pollock can in good conscience be missed. Through May 5. ♦ **"Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi: Father and Daughter Painters in Baroque Italy."** Virtually the only woman painter among the fraternity of Old Masters, Artemisia Gentileschi has inspired novels, films, and a current play, thanks in part to speculation about her romantic misfortunes. Was she raped by her father's colleague? Or was she simply, as one sixties-era scholar put it, "a lascivious and precocious girl" who sued her lover for not making good on his marriage promises? Either way, she was a painter of great and often grisly refinement, as this dual survey makes clear. Like Caravaggio, who inspired their realist style, the Gentileschis didn't skimp on skin, gold, velvet, or violence; Artemisia's depiction of Judith modelling a low-cut blue gown as she beheads a struggling Holofernes is a cleavage picture in both senses. While Artemisia rarely equalled the delicacy of her father's naturalism, she had a more focussed eye for narrative nuance: note the way Judith has rolled up her sleeves before getting to work. Through May 12. ♦ **"Earthly Bodies: Irving Penn's Nudes, 1949-50."** In 1949, soon after making a name for himself as a fashion photographer, Irving Penn began a sort of antifashion project. For two years, in his off-hours, he took close-up photographs of undressed, ample women. Cropped at the knees and armpits, the resulting torso-scapes are both voluptuous and spare. Some of the sixty prints on view could almost be mistaken for charcoal drawings: a whiplash line carves its way through an expanse of brilliant white paper and—presto!—summons up Willendorfian forms. Through April 21. ♦ **"Benjamin Brecknell: Rural England Through a Victorian Lens."** Through April 21. ♦ **"Splendid Isolation: Art of Easter Island."** Through Aug. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting."** Through May 21. ♦ **"Life of the City,"** a three-part exhibition of photographs taken from the museum's collection, from work submitted by museumgoers, and from photographs taken on September 11th and in its aftermath. Through May 21. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"Brazil: Body and Soul."** Through May 29. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The museum throws its largest Biennial since 1981, with

113 artists working in about that many mediums. Through May 26. ♦ In 1949, Irving Penn offset the rigors of shooting ethereal fashion models by indulging his eye for fleshier subjects. (A show of those photographs is currently on view at the Met.) Fifty years later, the Rubenesque dancer Alexandra Beller posed for Penn for three related series now on view here. The most evocative of these were captured with three-second-long exposures; they suggest the agonizing distortion of Hans Bellmer or Francis Bacon, as the dancer sprouts a third breast and two more arms. Through May 12. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Jewish Life in Ancient Egypt"** presents eight of the world's best preserved papyri, part of the museum's collection, which originated in a Jewish settlement, Elephantine Island, eight hundred years after the Exodus from Egypt. Through May 12. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (217-5800)—Bette Davis once said, "Give me any color as long as it's red." The people at F.I.T. act on this advice in a showcase of nearly a hundred evening gowns, handbags, and hats (plus a fox-hunting ensemble), all the color of an F.D.N.Y. truck. The show cuts a wide historic swath, ranging from an eighteenth-century woollen cape straight out of Little Red Riding Hood to a beaded compact in the shape of a target designed this year by clutch maven Judith Leiber. Seeing red has never looked better. Through April 20. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

CECILY BROWN
Brown's modestly sized, casually frantic new paintings evoke the phrase "a dab hand." Jumbled, wristy strokes fill the middle grounds of vestigial landscapes, hinting at rampant flora and fauna (rabbits materialize in one picture). Colors are itchily sensual and Bacon-like (as in Francis), and the rumpled pictorial space suggests molten Cubism. Brown's drive to resurrect an art of painterly virtuosity for its own sake produces awkward but pleasing exertion, like that of a friendly massage. These are parlor paintings; they seethe winningly from about ten feet away and languish at any greater distance. Through March 16. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 744-2313.)

THÉODORE ROUSSEAU
Though the Barbizon star (1812-67) has apparently never been given an exhibition in America until now, his rugged mossy landscapes are apt to look familiar, and not just from art-history textbooks. In the later paintings, you can see where Yankee mystics like Inness and Blakelock got their dappled impasto. To contemporary taste, though, it's the early Rousseau that's most compelling. The group of small plein-air landscapes on view (of streams, caves, and rolling farmland) have the sparkling urgency of Corot or Valenciennes. Through March 9. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606.)

STEPHEN VITIELLO
The artist is a triple threat, a musician and curator, who was inspired to experiment with sound installation after collaborating with such artists as Tony Oursler and Nam June Paik. His New York début opens with a witty suite of sculptures made from damaged loudspeakers, each one broadcasting the sounds of its particular destruction—a cannon shot, a chopping axe, an archer's bull's-eye. Upstairs, feedback from an audio loop of peeping frog chirps—a microphone in orbit, thanks to a disco-ball rotation motor, picks up the chirps from a speaker on the floor—transforming the quaint back gallery with its red-and-yellow windows into a rustic retreat. Through March 17. (The Project, 427 W. 126th St. 662-8610.)

Short List

JOHN BALDESSARI
Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Through March 30.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

AMY CUTLER
The smallest of these detailed vignettes shows a young woman in a simple print dress seated on a three-legged stool, absently inspecting her hoof. This blend of domestic familiarity and fantasy serves Cutler well in scenes of girls pulling a house through the snow by their braids, and goat-riding jousters armed with umbrellas. Through March 23. (Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 255-8450.)

JOY EPISALLA
Episalla's third show, "Removed," is a fragmentary elegy for her childhood home in Yonkers. The centerpiece, a huge drab familial couch, has been elaborately disassembled, documented, and transformed (via photomurals) into a padded cell. Elsewhere, in life-size photographs of worn carpets and walls, a furtive Rachel Whiteread-like sentimentality creeps into view. The most affecting work might be the one you're most likely to overlook: a small video of light capering around the ceiling of an abandoned bathroom. Through March 23. (Debs, 525 W. 26th St. 643-2070.)

LISA HOKE / MELISSA MEYER
Hoke adapts ordinary materials (wineglasses, office paper, rubber bands) to make winningly slight installations. The best of them, a wall composed of sheets of rolled paper, offers a jolt of stained-glass radiance. In the second gallery, Meyer's abstract watercolors offer a counterweight to Hoke's charm. Their bright scribbles and ideographs, dissolving and reforming in crowded formations,

SURREALISM
DESIRE UNBOUND

Breton
De Chirico
Dalí
Ernst
Carrington
Cornell
Duchamp
Kahlo
Magritte
Miró
Tanning

"DESIRE IS THE GREAT FORCE"
— Guillaume Apollinaire, 1913

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René Magritte, *The Rape*, 1934, The Menil Collection, Houston © Charly Herscovici, Brussels / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, 2002.

deliver a slow, serene voluptuousness. Through March 9. (Harris, 529 W. 20th St. 463-9666.)

UGO RONDINONE
The Swiss maestro of bittersweet decadence has mounted this show's title ("A Horse with No Name," after the Neil Young song about heroin) in neon atop the gallery building. Inside, life casts of three fat men in clown makeup and fur, feathers, and other primitivist stuff doze on the floor. Two right-angled, forty-foot walls of mirror mosaic contain tiny speakers that broadcast, to the accompaniment of a melancholy piano tattoo, a circular dialogue of failed stabs at intimacy between a man and a woman. As usual with Rondinone, emotional exhaustion and futility are made to seem wondrous, desirable states. Through April 20. (Matthew Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.)

WILLIAM WEGMAN
Wegman's œuvre extends well beyond weimaraners, as this entertaining show reminds us. The installation pairs drawings and videos from the early seventies with their counterparts from the last five years (some videos do feature canine cameos). The early drawings, rudimentary pencil sketches combining image and text, are wonderfully dry. Captions like "big little finger" and "I have a large IQ and shirt" are irresistible in their deadpan absurdity. The recent works on paper are more elaborate and less effective, combining gouache and kitschy collage elements in a pseudo-saccharine pastiche. Through March 9. (Gorney, Bravin & Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 352-8372.)

Short List

ROB DE MAR
Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937.
Through March 9.

DAVID SHAPIRO
Liebman Magnan, 552 W. 24th St. 255-3225.
Through March 9.

JANET SOBEL
Snyder, 601 W. 29th St. 871-1077.
Through March 9.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

ELEANOR ANTIN
The whimsical feminist/conceptualist artist has travelled back in time before, but never as far as ancient Pompeii, which she re-creates in lavish staged photographs based on the camp-classical novels of Edward Bulwer-Lytton. The results are everything an Alma-Tadema fan could wish for, complete with grappling gladiators, demure slave girls, and banqueting patricians. Like the moralizing academic paintings they spoof, Antin's pictures are guilty pleasures. Through March 16. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.)

BRIAN CROCKETT
Hairless lab mice (they seem to be sculpted from pink marble but are actually casts made of a marble-polymer alloy) portray the seven deadly sins in this suite of sculptures whose inspiration seems to lie somewhere between Michelangelo and Rat Fink. Crockett based the figures, all roughly a foot high, on actual genetic alterations; the model for "Greed" had an extra chromosome, and "Lust" was engineered to be extra-sensitive to touch. The over-all experience hovers between entertaining and pedantic. Through April 6. (Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.)

LORI HERSBERGER
In concurrent exhibitions, the Swiss artist shows off his appealing, punk-casual style. Using spray paints in dual registers (Day-Glo fluorescents or faint grays and blues), Hersberger makes airy, unruly abstractions, full of meandering shapes that lurch from aggression to delicacy. The results suggest a cross between early Joan Snyder and Albert Oehlen. (Through March 30 at Brownstone, 39 Wooster St., 334-3455; and through March 9 at the Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway, 925-2035.)

CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN
In 1964, with the aid of some scantily clad actors and a lot of raw chicken, the artist staged "Meat Joy," a writhing romp of Dionysian excess that scandalized audiences. It's now considered a key work of body art, and Schneemann, once relegated to the status of feminist footnote, recently sold her papers to the Getty Center. A projected videotape of the original and still squirm-inducing performance is installed in the back of this mini-retrospective, which spans four decades. The earliest work remains the most enticing. Through March 9. (P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642.)

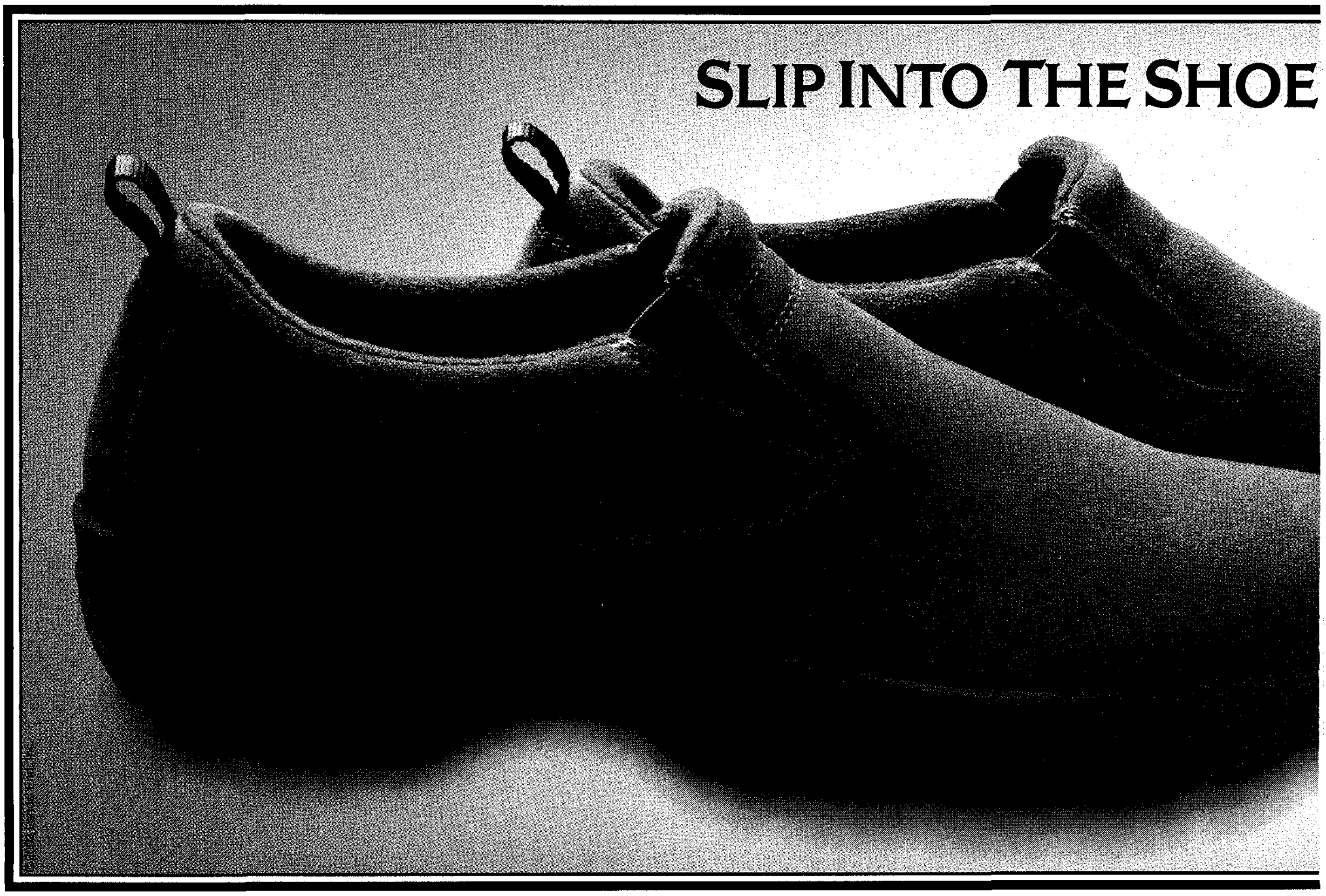
Short List

TIM HAWKINSON
Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.
Through March 30.

MARLENE MC CARTY
Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083.
Through March 23.

GALLERIES-BROOKLYN

ANNIE COGGAN
A new Fort Greene gallery devoted to design and architecture has given this witty furniture maker a room of her own to install a series of white enamelled-steel love seats inspired by the writer Virginia Woolf. Their intersecting rectilinear forms recall Gerrit Rietveld's De Stijl designs. In "Loveseat for a Fight," a pair of seats face in opposite directions, but share a single back that features a peekaboo rectangle to facilitate rapprochement. Also on view is a series of small maquettes and related watercolors, collectively and ironically titled "Lady Furniture." One scholar's desk, dedicated to Hannah Arendt, is as staunch and intricate as the philosopher's own work. Through March 16. (A: D/B Project Space, 116 S. Portland Ave. 718-855-9394.)



GARY PANTER
Panter, who won three Emmy awards for his design work on "Pee-wee's Playhouse," has re-created his own adolescent clubhouse in an installation that he describes as "an outgrowth of light shows I did in my garage in the sixties." Viewers can lounge on a low couch and watch Panter's stoners' paradise of light and shadow. They can also peek behind the curtain to find the wizard and his flashlight-bearing assistants in a complex dance around a wooden scaffold hung with paper snowflakes, reflectors, filters, and a disco ball. Through March 18; call for show times. (Pierogi, 177 N. 9th St. 718-599-2144.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

MICHAEL FLOMEN
The only light in these massive black-and-white images is provided by blasts from the tails of fireflies. Their flashbulb-like bursts, captured over long exposures, illuminate the legs of the bugs and the dust and debris that they're flying through. Through March 23. (Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819.)

DANA HOEY
What at first seem like slick ads featuring young women turn out to be scenes of idealism gone wrong: a tough tattooed girl mixing meth in the trunk of her car, a flower child who has fallen for the wrong guy, a pregnant woman smoking. Hoey doesn't moralize, she just presents the girls in their moments of almost religious ecstasy. She calls the show "Moon Bitches," an overly butch title for this mildly rebellious show. Through March 23. (Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 680-9467.)

LENI RIEFENSTAHL
The versatile actress, filmmaker, and photographer was recruited early in her career by Hitler to produce epic films for his Ministry of Propaganda. The association has stuck with her ever since, and probably explains why this show is her American début. The pictures here, made during the shooting of the film "Olympia," aggrandize the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. A pole-vaulter suspended in midair, a diver on the point of entering the water, a spooky stadium at night, surrounded by searchlights, as if it were being beamed up into a spaceship—the impressive selection here brings out the ecstatic and otherworldly quality of her drive to exalt, but the show does nothing to dissociate the artist from the Aryan ideologue. Through March 8. (Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 680-9889.)

"THE EYE OF THE SCULPTOR"
Three famous chisellers—Brancusi, Henry Moore, and David Smith—turned out remarkably handsome photographs of their own sculptures. In Brancusi's vintage prints, the most elegant of the three, the sculptor's geometric busts and towering totems seem more figurative than ever. Henry Moore zooms right through the holes he bored in his nudes, as if we might not have noticed them. Only the minimalist, David Smith, could be bothered to turn away from his stainless-steel boxes long enough to shoot a flesh-and-blood nude—he's the only one in the show who used the camera to explore shapes and masses he hadn't already built. Through March 16. (Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930.)

"THE LIMELIGHT YEARS: PHOTOGRAPHS 1954-61"
In 1954, Helen Gee opened a coffeehouse in the West Village called the Limelight. It was a hangout for members of the Photo League and, this show claims, the home of the first commercial photography gallery. For a hundred bucks (or less) you could buy images by Robert Frank, W. Eugene Smith, Arnold Newman, Leon Levinstein, Lisette Model, and others. The exhibition includes many gems from Gee's personal collection. Needless to say, prices have gone up. Through April 13. (Morthland, 511 W. 25th St. 242-7767.)

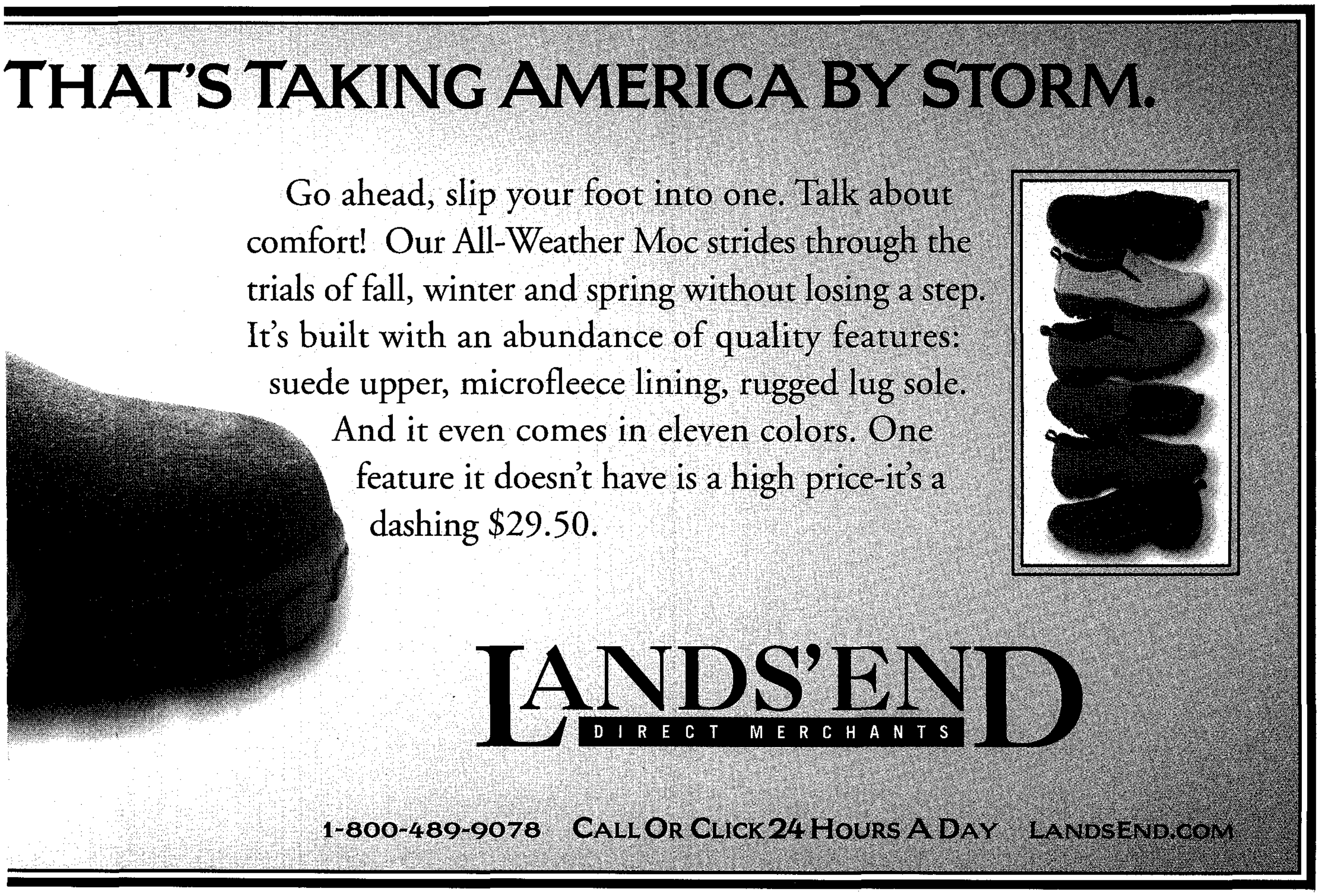
"WOMEN BY WOMEN"
This show opens with two giants of dress-up, Comtesse de Castiglione and Cindy Sherman, who support the show's theory that as soon as women started taking pictures they began playing the dress-up game in front of the camera. Diane Arbus's "Woman with a Beehive Hairdo, New York City" and Nan Goldin's early "Colette Modelling in the Beauty Parade" employ costume as a means of disguise, and Sally Mann's nudes of her daughters, in this context, seem to imply that nudity itself is another form of feminine disguise. The more recent work of Nikki S. Lee, Renée Cox, and Shirin Neshat is a more direct legacy of Sherman and the Countess—but they use costume to comment on race as well as gender. Through March 30. (Cook, 1063 Madison Ave., at 80th St. 737-3550.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—**"Another Vietnam: Pictures of the War from the Other Side"** looks at Southeast Asia in the sixties and early seventies from the eyes of Vietcong soldiers, reporters, and state-sanctioned photographers. Through March 17. ♦ The photographs in **"Hidden Truths: Bloody Sunday 1972"** bear witness to the events of January 30, 1972, when the British Army killed thirteen Republican protesters and bystanders in Derry, Northern Ireland. Through March 17. ♦ **"The First Snapshots,"** an exhibition of candids shot by amateur photographers in the eighteen-hundreds with the earliest Kodak cameras. Through March 17. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON
Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.
Through March 9.

WILLIAM EGGLESTON
Yancey Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St.
646-230-9610. Through March 16.



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See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
March 6 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: A sale of wristwatches, clocks, and pocket watches, featuring work by Cartier, Patek Philippe, and Breguet (including a gold skeletonized tourbillon wristwatch from 1998, estimated to sell for approximately a hundred thousand dollars). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
March 6 at 10 A.M.: "House Sales"—held on the first Wednesdays of most months—are a new departure for Christie's, allowing buyers to peruse a wide range of antique and modern furniture, silver, porcelain, rugs, and other decorative items. A pair of William IV ebony-inlaid oak daybeds circa 1835 are a highlight of this week's sale. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

DOYLE
March 12 at 10 A.M.: "Fine Furniture, Decorations, and Paintings," a sale that also includes a selection of prints, porcelain, silver, and rugs. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN
March 6 at 7: "One Hundred Important Works of Art on Paper," an impressive selection of works by such artists as Pissarro, Léger ("Hommage à Louis David," an idealized scene of a working-class holiday), de Kooning, and Chagall ("L'Artiste et Paris," a watercolor estimated to bring up to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars). ♦ March 7 at 10:30 A.M. and 2:30: A large sale of prints and drawings from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including a selection of color drypoints by Mary Cassatt and a group of female nudes and urban scenes by John Sloan. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

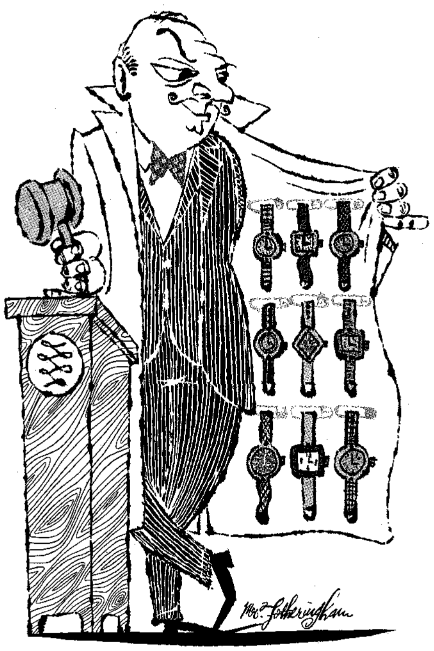
WENDY NEW YORK ARMORY ANTIQUES SHOW
A hundred dealers offer a range of American and European furniture, paintings, rare books, jewelry, and a host of decorative items. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. 472-1180. March 6-10.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Andrei Konchalovsky's première production of Prokofiev's **"War and Peace"**—conducted, with brisk command and dusky glamour, by Valery Gergiev—is among the Met's most impressive accomplishments, featuring contributions from an immense cast that includes Anna Netrebko, Elena Obraztsova, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Gegam Grigorian, Samuel Ramey, Fedor Mozhaev, and John Cheek. (March 6 at 7:30.) ♦ With Larissa Shevchenko and Alexei Steblianko (in their débuts) replacing Obraztsova and Grigorian. (March 9 at 8.) ♦ With Shevchenko and Steblianko, and with Vassily Gerello returning to the role of Napoleon; Gianandrea Noseda conducts. (March 12 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Tosca,"** with Georgina Lukács, Richard Leech, and Carlo Guelfi; Julius Rudel conducts. (March 7 at 8.) ♦ A return of John Dexter's celebrated 1981 triple bill of modern French music theatre, designed by David Hockney, and conducted by James Levine. Satie's surrealist ballet **"Parade,"** from 1917 (choreographed by Gray Veredon and featuring Damien Woetzel and Christine McMillan), is followed by two operas that it influenced, Poulenc's **"Les Mamelles de Tirésias"** (with Ainhoa Arteta, Jane Bunnell, Earle Patriarco, Mark Oswald, and John Hancock) and Ravel's **"L'Enfant et les Sortilèges"** (featuring Danielle de Niese, Wendy White, Olga Makarina, Ruth Ann Swenson, Alfred Walker, and Patriarco). The Satie and the Poulenc (completed in 1945) are irreverent wartime comedies, with threatening undertones; the Ravel, a magical tale of a naughty child tormented by his bedroom furniture come to life, concludes the evening in an embrace of motherly love. (March 8 and March 11 at 8.) ♦ **"Rigoletto,"** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Denyce Graves, Marcelo Álvarez, Juan Pons, and Robert Lloyd; Marco Guidarini. (March 9 at 1.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
For decades, George Gershwin's "folk opera" **"Porgy and Bess"** was thought of as a slack and unfocussed piece that happened to contain some marvellous songs—not surprising, since the score was heavily cut back for its 1935 Broadway première. That all changed in 1976, when the Houston Grand Opera mounted the first production of Gershwin's complete, original version to a chorus of critical acclaim. The conductor was John DeMain, who comes to City Opera to lend his skills to a revival of the company's 2000 production. With Alvy Powell and Marquita Lister in the title roles. (March 7 at 7:30 and March 9 at 8.) ♦ With Marsha Thompson and Leonard Rowe; DeMain. (March 8 at 8 and March 12 at 7:30.) ♦ With Alison Buchanan and James Edward Pierce; Richard Bado. (March 9 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 307-4100.)



Sotheby's holds a sale of watches and clocks on March 6.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

AMATO OPERA
The feisty East Village chamber-opera company presents Donizetti's **"L'Elisir d'Amore."** (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. March 8-9 at 7:30 and March 10 at 2:30. These are the final performances.)

RICHARD TUCKER FOUNDATION CONCERT
Bryn Terfel, Denyce Graves, Marcelo Álvarez, and Gregory Turay (winner of the 2000 Richard Tucker Award) are among the singers appearing in a free concert, with the pianist Yelena Kurdina, at Temple Emanu-El. (Fifth Ave. at 65th St. March 12 at 6:30. Patrons will be seated on a first-come, first-served basis, beginning at 6.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
The vocal demands of Berlioz's lovely set of orchestral songs, "Les Nuits d'Été" ("Summer Nights"), have made performances all too rare: some lie well for a soprano range, while others are more comfortable for a mezzo. The countertenor David Daniels, making his Philharmonic début, crosses the gender boundary to take up the challenge; the conductor is Paul Daniel (another début), who also leads music by Debussy ("Danse Sacrée et Danse Profane," with the harpist Nancy Allen) and Beethoven (the Second Symphony). (March 6-8 at 8.) ♦ Bramwell Tovey, a conductor who made his name by creating the Winnipeg Symphony's internationally renowned new-music festival, makes his subscription début with the Philharmonic in a program featuring music by Webern (the Symphony, Op. 21), Haydn (the Trumpet Concerto, with Philip Smith), and Mozart (the Symphony No. 39 in E-Flat Major). (March 9 at 8 and March 12 at 6:45.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500.)

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK
Although many New Yorkers know the Oratorio Society for its annual "Messiah" presentations at Carnegie Hall, few are aware that the hall, completed in 1891, was actually built to host its performances. (For this we can thank Andrew Carnegie's wife, Louise, who sang in the alto section.) In its latest program, the group, conducted by Lyndon Woodside, brings its home-court advantage to music by Bloch, Bernstein (the "Chichester Psalms"), and Barber ("Prayers of Kirkegaard"), accompanied by the Westchester Philharmonic. (247-7800. March 6 at 8.)

VOICES OF ASCENSION
A rare performance of Carissimi's oratorio "Jonah" highlights a concert of Baroque music for chorus and orchestra, which also features music by Monteverdi and Handel ("Zadok the Priest"). Dennis Keene conducts. (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 358-1469. March 7 at 8.)

ST. PETERSBURG PHILHARMONIC
Yuri Temirkanov leads his orchestra in a mini-festival of the Rachmaninoff piano concertos and other Russian favorites. March 7 at 8: Yefim Bronfman plays the Concerto No. 3 in a program that includes Liadov's "Baba-Yaga" (a wisp of a tone poem, named for the witch of Russian fairy tales) and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5. ♦ March 8 at 8: The Piano Concerto No. 1, performed by Leif Ove Andsnes, is but a prelude to Shostakovich's massive "Leningrad" Symphony. ♦ March 9 at 8: Zoltán Kocsis, a rhythmically propulsive player with an intellectual streak, plays the Concerto No. 2 in a concert that concludes with Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA
In his first concert with the A.C.O., the group's music director designate, Steven Sloane (until recently the music director of Charleston's Spoleto Festival), has devised a program to give his players—and the audience—a jolt: the world première of Stewart Wallace's "The Book of Five" (featuring the British art-rock ensemble Icebreaker, who play guitars, saxophones, percussion, and panpipes), followed by the lusciously late-Romantic Symphony in F-Sharp Major by Erich Wolfgang Korngold, the Viennese émigré who gave Hollywood its first high-class movie scores. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. March 10 at 3.)

RECITALS

ANDREW VIOLETTE
Violette is an unsung maverick among New York composers. Prone to indulge in lush, Lisztian harmonies, he also makes use of blistering dissonance and trancelike repetition; the resulting cyclone of sound often resembles a minimalist update of Messiaen's mystical keyboard pieces, except that Violette has a feverish (and at times, fatiguing) voice of his own. On this program, the composer himself plays the world première of a single, gargantuan work, the Seventh Piano Sonata. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. March 6 at 8.)

ELECTRONIC X-TRAVAGANZA
The Kitchen hosts three nights of cutting-edge electronic music, featuring such performer/composers as David Behrman, Lukas Ligeti, and Christina Wheeler. (512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. March 7-9 at 8.)

TABLES FOR TWO

THE HARRISON

355 Greenwich St. (274-9310)—Jimmy Bradley and Danny Abrams, an extroverted young chef-restaurateur duo, were apparently just getting started a couple of years ago when they opened the Red Cat, a favorite Chelsea bistro that everyone claims to have discovered. Now they've turned the culinary volume up a few notches and moved to Tribeca.

If you find a seat at the packed bar, the bartender will offer you a taste of Bradley's bootleg limoncello, which is tart, sweet, and so strong it makes the top of your head sting. When Bradley passes by on one of his frequent dining-room tours, he'll tell you the recipe. Abrams will probably be there, too, between motorcycle trips to the Red Cat, helmet in hand, chatting up the customers and downing a batch of the rich chocolate beignets (he claims to eat four orders a day, yet he's as thin as a piano leg).

The new place is airier and more austere than its cozy cousin, but it gets plenty of color from its crowd: a couple of auburn minks and a turquoise cloche in one corner, flashes of red lipstick at the bar, a head of green hair trying to score a table at the reservation stand. The flavors on the small, New American menu are as vivid as the clientele yet almost irreverently mellow. To start, the cavatelli with veal cheeks, tomato, and Pecorino is good, and so are yellowfin tuna atop cucumber and yellow-tomato gazpacho and the sweet fried clams with lemon-coriander aioli. Among the fish entrées, the day-boat cod, which comes with "melted" leeks and shiitakes in porcini broth, is especially satisfying, but this is a terrific place to order a shell steak, too; Bradley's is flavored with pancetta and balsamic vinegar. The side of pumpkin risotto with apricots and mascarpone is almost like a dessert and strictly for sharing.

Like the rest of the staff, the sommelier is as enthusiastic as he is blasé and will quickly calculate the distance between the Italian regions of two bottles on the international list—although he'll laugh at the question before adding, "I'm a fast driver." For dessert, the beignets are excellent; the buttermilk panna cotta with citrus fruit is less lethal. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays for lunch and dinner, Sundays and Mondays for dinner only. Entrées $18-$23.)

—*Emily Nunn*

MUSIC BY GYÖRGY LIGETI

Three works presented by Alarm Will Sound and their conductor, Alan Pierson, including the Piano Concerto (a fearsome work of scintillating, multi-rhythmic complexity) and the New York première of the "Hamburg Concerto" for horn. (Miller Theatre, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. March 8 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC

Before he started mass-producing Italian operas, the young Rossini cut his teeth at age twelve by writing a clutch of charming string sonatas (for an unconventional quartet of two violins, cello, and bass); two of them highlight the floating chamber-music series' upcoming concerts, which feature the violinist Mark Peskanov and the bassist Franco Petracchi, among others. March 7 and March 9 at 7:30: The Sonata No. 3 in C Major shares the program with music by Bottesini and Mozart ("Eine Kleine Nachtmusik"). ♦ March 8 at 7:30 and March 10 at 4: Rossini's Sonata No. 1 in C Major takes its place alongside two works by Dvořák (the Terzetto and the String Quintet in G Major). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

JOHN ZORN/CHARLES WUORINEN

Bradley Lubman conducts the Musica Nova ensemble in music by two antipodes of American composition, including the U.S. première of Zorn's convulsive, rock-laced "Rituals." (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 279-4200. March 9 at 7:30.)

ANNE SOFIE VON OTTER

This cool-toned mezzo-soprano's performances may not be long on emotional fervor, but her interpretive delicacy and whistle-clean technique have made her a persuasive advocate for a wide range of composers, famous or not. Her program at Alice Tully Hall (with her longtime pianist, Bengt Forsberg) features music by several Swedish composers from the early twentieth century, along with songs by Schubert and Weill. (721-6500. March 10 at 2.)

JAMES GALWAY AND PHILLIP MOLL

The pop-star flutist and his accompanist offer an afternoon of music *à la française,* including pieces by Franck (the Sonata in A Major) and Debussy. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. March 10 at 3.)

AURYN STRING QUARTET

This German quartet, formed in 1981 by members of the European Community Youth Orchestra, has retained a fresh approach to programming, offering music by Kurtág (the "Officium Breve") in addition to quartets by Mendelssohn and Beethoven (in A Minor, Op. 132) at the Frick Collection. (1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. March 10 at 5.)

MET CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

James Levine leads the "Brandenburg" Concertos at Weill Recital Hall. (247-7800. March 10 at 5.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

A seventieth-birthday concert for one of the Society's most distinguished members, Joseph Silverstein, features the violinist performing music by Schubert, Mozart, and Bartók (the Sonata for Solo Violin) with some talented friends sitting in (including the bassist Edgar Meyer). (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788. March 10 at 5 and March 12 at 7:30.)

EUGENIA ZUKERMAN AND ANTHONY NEWMAN

The flutist and the pianist offer a rush-hour concert evoking the fairy-tale world of Ludwig II of Bavaria, featuring works by Weber, Wagner, and Liszt. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 930-0571. March 12 at 6:30.)

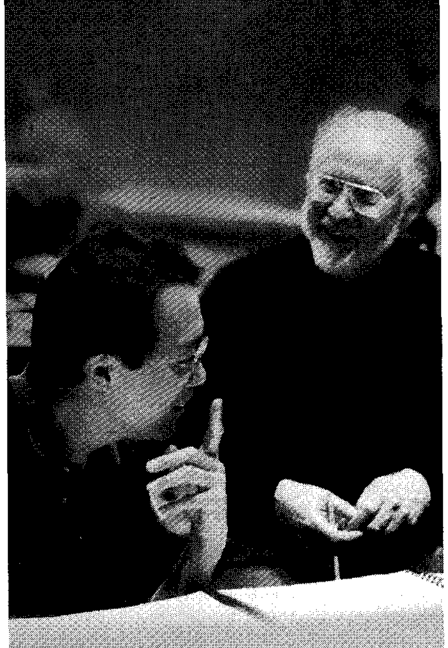
ABOVE AND BEYOND

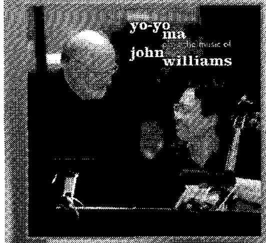
READINGS

March 6 at 8: Paula Cohen offers passages from her historical novel, "Gramercy Park." (Rocky Sullivan's, 129 Lexington Ave., near 29th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 11 at 7:30: Robert Long and Cynthia Zarin read from their poetry. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 11 at 8: The novelists Leslie Epstein and David Grossman read selections from their recent works. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.)

TALKS

March 6 at 6: The graphic designer and writer Edward M. Gomez moderates a discussion about the design scene in Tokyo with the graphic designer Kan Akita, the art critic Junji Ito, and the architects Masayuki Kurokawa and Takashi Sugimoto, all of whom live in Japan. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 832-1155.) ♦ March 7 at 8: Two psychiatrists—Dr. Mark Epstein, a practicing Buddhist and the author of "Thoughts Without a Thinker," and Dr. Abraham Twerski, a Hasidic rabbi and the founder of a drug-treatment facility called the Gateway Rehabilitation Center—consider the concept of the self. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5488.) ♦ March 10, from noon to six: As a part of an open house at the Kabbalah Centre, adherents of the mystical Jewish belief system present such lectures as "The Power of Kabbalah," "What Your Rabbi, Priest, Guru, and Shrink Never Told You," and "Inside & Out: Kabbalistic Tips for Looking Good and Feeling Great." (155 E. 48th St. For more information, call 644-0025.)





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MOVIES OPENING

ALL ABOUT THE BENJAMINS
A Miami bounty hunter (Ice Cube) and a bail-jumping con man (Mike Epps) double-cross a team of diamond thieves in an action comedy directed by Kevin Bray. Opening March 8.

MISS WONTON
The modern-day story of a young Chinese woman (Amy Ting) who leaves her village and emigrates to New York. Meng Ong directed. Opening March 8. (Cinema Village.)

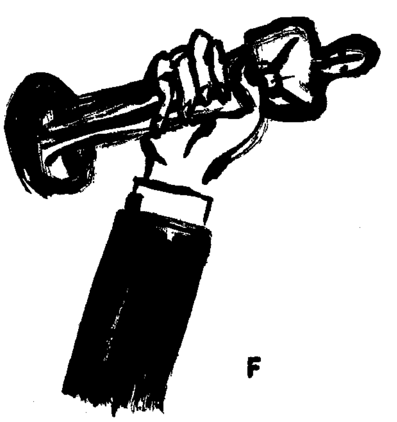
THE TIME MACHINE
Guy Pearce plays the lead role in this adaptation of H. G. Wells's novel about time travel. The cast also includes Jeremy Irons and Orlando Jones. Directed by Simon Wells. Opening March 8.

FILM NOTES

AMÉLIE
A waifish Parisienne discovers her mission in life: to bring unexpected happiness to others, and so to herself. Such is the story of Amélie (Audrey Tautou), and the simplicity of it—not to mention its dangerous surfeit of sweetness—appears to have touched a universal nerve. (In truth, the saga of the movie's success is more telling than anything in the movie itself.) Tautou is clearly a find, although one wonders what Mathieu Kassovitz, who plays the object of her affection, made of his role; it was Kassovitz who, in 1995, yanked French cinema up to date with his baring of ethnic hostilities in "La Haine." The Paris of this new movie lies at the other extreme, although what nags at you most is not the neighborly charm but the itchy, unsettled manner of the director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet. How far should we trust a plea for benevolence when it feels like a box of tricks? In French.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/01.) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and 34th Street Theatre.)

A BEAUTIFUL MIND
If you think the title stinks, try the movie. Russell Crowe plays John Nash, a real-life mathematician whose most radical work was produced in his early twenties and who shared the 1994 Nobel Prize for Economics at the age of sixty-six. In between lay years of darkness, during which Nash was assailed by paranoid schizophrenia. When it comes to the delicate matter of his delusions, this earnest movie, written by Akiva Goldsman and directed by Ron Howard, pulls a flagrant scam: whole characters and episodes are presented as urgently authentic, only to be revealed as figments of a cracked imagination. Crowe pulls out the stops, but he looks too bullish and controlled for such a pitiable victim. The movie grinds on forever until it bumps into redemption; the best reason to stay with it is Jennifer Connelly, who smolders and suffers to perfection as Nash's weary wife. Math skills not required.—*A.L.* (1/7/02) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BLACK HAWK DOWN
This account of the ill-fated 1993 Special Forces action in Mogadishu, Somalia, which resulted in the death of eighteen Americans, is exceptionally violent but also truthful to the pain and disorder of battle. It's very clearly directed by Ridley Scott, who allows you to see where the different groups of men are fighting in relation to one another. The movie suggests that despite the casualties the battle was not a total failure but rather a demonstration of strength—the men were killed, in part, because they stayed in the danger zone to rescue survivors from the two helicopters that were shot down. With Sam Shepard, Tom Sizemore, and Josh Hartnett, all submerging themselves in the business at hand. Ken Nolan, adapting Mark Bowden's book, achieves the right tone of matter-of-factness, resolution, and defiance.—*David Denby* (12/24 & 31/01) (Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)



BLOW OUT
It has a dreamlike clarity and inevitability, but you'll never make the mistake of thinking it's only a dream. John Travolta is Jack, a sound-effects man who happens to record the noise of a car speeding across a bridge, a shot, a blowout, and the crash of the car into the water below. The driver—the governor who is the most popular candidate for the Presidency—is dead, but Jack is able to rescue the governor's passenger, a cuddly blonde (Nancy Allen). On paper this 1981 movie, written and directed by Brian De Palma, might seem to be just a political thriller, but it has a rapt intensity that makes it unlike any other political thriller. Playing an adult (his first), and an intelligent one, Travolta has a vibrating physical sensitivity like that of a very young Brando, and Nancy Allen, who gives her role a flirty iridescence, is equally vivid. It's as if De Palma had finally understood what technique is for; this is the first film he made about the things that really matter to him.—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 11.)

COLLATERAL DAMAGE
After his family is killed in a terrorist attack, Arnold Schwarzenegger goes off by himself to the Colombian jungle to find the killer. Andrew Davis's new thriller offers little more than an absurd plot strung between explosions. The movie's physical virtuosity is meaningless—you've seen it before. With Elias Koteas as a ruthless C.I.A. man, Francesca Neri and Cliff Curtis as the Colombians, and John Turturro and John Leguizamo, wandering about in small, unfathomable roles.—*D.D.* (Astor Plaza, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

CROSSROADS
Britney Spears's début movie presents a delicate marketing problem: how do you turn a super-bland pop star into a human being without upsetting her fans? Answer: by letting Britney dance provocatively on her bed while also making her the class valedictorian and a virgin, by having her escape from her small town while making sure that she calls home at every pit stop between Georgia and Los Angeles, and so on. Will Britney become a movie star? Maybe, but, not to put too fine a point on it, there's something wrong with her face. In closeup, her eyes appear too widely spaced, her upper lip too soft, and her flesh seems coated with a lab-developed polymer that gives it the hue of a Peking duck.—*D.D.* (3/4/02) (East 85th Street, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

40 DAYS AND 40 NIGHTS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

GOSFORD PARK
This Agatha Christie-style houseparty murder mystery, set in 1932, plants itself deep into social reality and achieves the kind of candor about class and sex that Christie would never have been capable of. The brilliant screenplay was written by Julian Fellowes. Robert Altman directs an enormous cast with lightness and speed and a masterly ability to pull the many little pieces of intrigue together into a coherent whole. Casually, the movie chronicles the end of the rigid British class system and the liberation of the working class through popular entertainment. The once-in-a-lifetime cast includes Michael Gambon, Kristin Scott Thomas, Maggie Smith, Jeremy Northam, and Charles Dance as the swells, and Helen Mirren, Eileen Atkins, Alan Bates, Clive Owen, and Emily Watson as the servants.—*D.D.* (1/14/02) (Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

IN THE BEDROOM
In Camden, Maine, a twenty-one-year-old college student, Frank (Nick Stahl), is having a headlong summer affair with a local woman, Natalie (Marisa Tomei). Natalie is separated from her husband (William Mapother), the loutish scion of a prominent local family. When the husband kills his rival, Frank's hypercivilized parents (Tom Wilkinson and Sissy Spacek) begin to consider vengeance as a way of saving themselves from destroying each other. This Sophoclean tale, fleshed out from an elliptical short story by Andre Dubus, draws its strength from minute observation of settings and moods, and from a gradual tightening of the winch. Much of it is very quiet (the first-time director, Todd Field, is an actor and a photographer), but when it explodes, the violence actually means something.—*D.D.* (11/26/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea West, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Metro Twin, and 34th Street Theatre.)

ITALIAN FOR BEGINNERS
Another one of those Dogme '95 films that purport to give the viewer an authentic you-are-there-experience. Three couples travel together to Venice, a minimum of complications ensue, and, fortunately, the director Lone Scherfig doesn't have much to say. She gets credit, though, for making the least dogmatic of all the Dogme films. In Danish and Italian.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 64th and 2nd.)

JOHN Q.
When his young son needs a heart transplant and his insurance won't cover the operation, a Chicago machinist (Denzel Washington) takes a prominent surgeon (James Woods) and a number of patients hostage, threatening to kill his captives if his son doesn't get a new ticker. This tearjerker, written by James Kearns and directed by Nick Cassavetes, is a trashy, opportunistic work that appears to have been intentionally pitched low in order to rouse an audience that the filmmakers view as politically somnolent. They may have calculated correctly: the movie is badly written, directed, and acted, yet the people in the theatre, fed up with the health-care system, seem alive to the picture and shout back at the screen.—*D.D.* (3/4/02) (Cinema 3, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

JULIUS CAESAR
As Brutus, James Mason is merely a gentleman for all seasons—which is too bad, because Joseph Mankiewicz's 1953 production positions Brutus as the tragic figure of the piece, a man too virtuous to finish off a coup d'état with the proper ruthlessness. Luckily, Marlon Brando's Marc Antony is one of the great celluloid Shakespearean performances. He begins with an almost fey modesty as he promenades next to Louis Calhern's proud, paternal Caesar. But over Caesar's corpse Brando begins to mix grief, rage, cunning, and ferocity; his reading of the funeral oration is so grievously angry you understand why it would rouse the rabble. The great John Gielgud, in the role of Cassius, brings unsettling echoes of Iago to his envy of Caesar and his manipulation of Brutus.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 10.)

LAST ORDERS
A gang of three Englishmen, in various states of decline, gather to mourn a fourth, an East London

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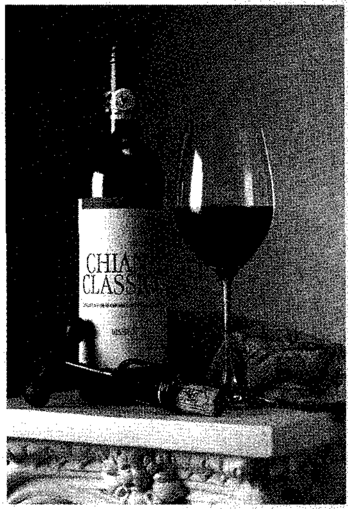

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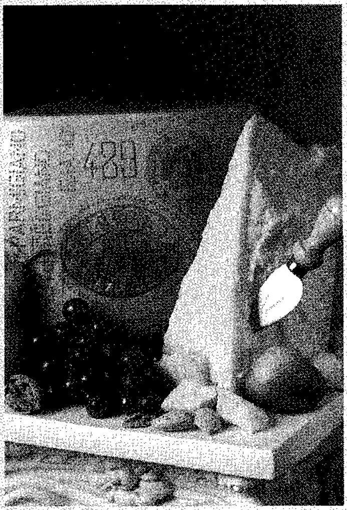

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Consorzio Del Formaggio
Parmigiano-Reggiano

butcher and veteran of the Second World War. Fred Schepisi's careful movie, adapted from Graham Swift's prize-winning novel, has a tricky, deck-shuffling structure, with past and present chopping repeatedly into one another; you may warm to this layering, though you could also argue that Schepisi is trying too hard to deepen a dangerously simple tale. The issue here is a friendship that survives the dwindling of a nation; we pass from an England proudly at war to the weary confines of a pub. The pals are played by David Hemmings, Tom Courtenay, Bob Hoskins, and, filling the dead man's shoes, Michael Caine. Some of their backchat has an oddly studied air—what would the film have felt like if Schepisi had allowed them to improvise? With Helen Mirren as the non-merry widow, and the unabashed Kelly Reilly as her younger self.—*A.L.* (2/18 & 25/02) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

MARYAM

Set during the hostage crisis of 1979, this drama portrays the my-so-called-life of a young Jersey girl of Iranian descent (played beautifully by Mariam Parris). At school, Maryam faces bias from classmates; at home, she attempts to wriggle out from under her strict parents. When her Muslim cousin arrives from their homeland, the culture clash becomes more serious, and the film evokes the jingoism of the Americans and the revolutionary idealism of the Iranians. Both begin to seem misguided. Ramin Serry, the writer-director, keeps the story buoyant with frivolous touches, and he ultimately succeeds in gracefully depicting a troubled time.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center.)

MEAN MACHINE

A dodgy English remake of the beloved macho-man comedy "The Longest Yard." In the 1974 version, Burt Reynolds led a team of convicts in a do-or-die football game against their prison guards. Here, the football has become soccer, and the former English professional Vinnie Jones attempts to take on Burt's alpha-male mantle—never a good idea. Barry Skolnick, the director, doesn't help matters when he sets the soccer highlights to a Euro-pop soundtrack. It's as though the original movie were left out overnight on the moors—everything is a bit pale and wan.—*Michael Agger* (Empire 25, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.)

MONSOON WEDDING

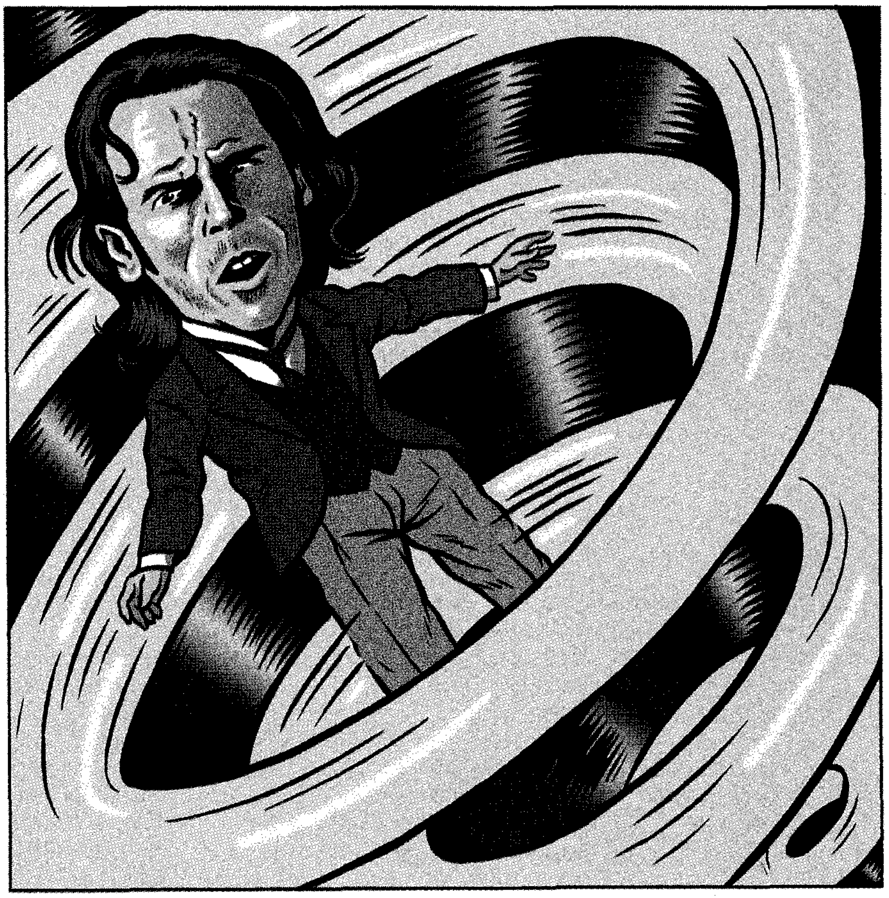
Mira Nair's new picture has been hailed as a feel-good spree, but it's better than that—a barely stable compound of the wounding, the confusing, and the appealing. The action takes place in Delhi, where a pair of middle-class parents (Lillete Dubey and Naseeruddin Shah) work themselves into a froth over the nuptials of their daughter (Vasundhara Das). Her marriage is, of course, arranged; for all the racket and buzz of the film's modernity, it finds time to make the suggestion—bewildering, perhaps, to audiences here—that from this archaic arrangement can spring an enduring love. The groom is flying in from Houston, Texas; another relative travels from Australia, and you brace yourself for the cultural collisions. The result is a comedy, but only just. India's stressful poise between orthodoxy and innovation (listen for the clash of peacock and cell phone) leads to a devastating family fracture that is only half-healed by the celebrations at the end. In English and Hindi, sometimes within a single conversation.—*A.L.* (2/18 & 25/02) (Paris and Sunshine Cinema.)

MONSTER'S BALL

Marc Forster's movie delivers an unworkable paradox: the characters are inarticulate, damaged people who have led heedless and tragic lives—portrayed with bitter realism—and yet the plotting is sheer Hollywood in its schemes and coincidences. Billy Bob Thornton is the Georgia corrections officer who conducts the execution of the husband (Sean "P. Diddy" Combs) of a local waitress (Halle Berry) and then falls in love with the widow. The slow, reticent dramaturgy has its moments of authenticity, especially in the balanced interracial romance: Thornton is quiet and affecting and Berry acts up a storm.—*D.D.* (Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, and Sunshine Cinema.)

NIGHT OF THE SHOOTING STARS

In its feeling and completeness, this 1982 film by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani may rank close to Jean Renoir's bafflingly beautiful "Grand Illusion." The story is a woman's memories of her adventures as a six-year-old in a Tuscan village during the summer of 1944, when the American troops were rumored to be only days away, and the Germans who had held the area under occupation were preparing to clear out—preparations that included mining the houses so they could blow them up. Yet this setting is magical, like a Shakespearean forest, and the woman's account has the quality of folklore and legend, and even its most tragic moments can be dizzyingly comic. The full fresco treatment that the directors give to the events of that summer is based on their own wartime experiences as adolescents, and on the accounts of others; it's this teeming, fecund mixture, fermenting in their heads for almost forty years, that produces the film's giddy, hallucinated realism. In Italian.—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 12.)



Guy Pearce in "The Time Machine," opening March 8.

MARK ZINGARELLI

NOTHING SACRED

What are generally sentimentalized as "the little people" are the targets of this famous 1937 screwball comedy. Ben Hecht, who wrote the script, has them dripping crocodile tears over a girl they think is dying of radium poisoning, and enjoying every minute of it. The audience may begin to wonder what makes the reporter-hero, Fredric March, and the girl, Carole Lombard, any different. The answer can only be that they, like the author, hate phoniness. William Wellman's direction is more leisurely than usual; he has such good material here that he takes his time.—*P.K.* (Moving Image; March 9.)

ON DANGEROUS GROUND

The first half contains sensational urban-cop stuff, and Robert Ryan is great as a police detective pushed to brutality, and almost to breakdown, by the hostility of crooks and citizens alike. In this 1951 movie, Nicholas Ray shoots and cuts with offhand incisiveness, as if his camera were keyed to his cop's febrile brain. But when Ryan's boss (Ed Begley) dispatches him to crack a killing in the boondocks, the movie dissolves into a melodramatic parable. Having experienced a debasing loneliness, Ryan goes through purification; Ida Lupino, as the blind sister of a mentally disturbed young murderer, is his angel of redemption.—*M.S.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; March 9.)

PÉPÉ LE MOKO

Superb entertainment. A classic romantic melodrama of the thirties, and one of the most compelling of all the fatalistic French screen romances, yet seen by few Americans because it was remade in Hollywood two years later as "Algiers." The remake was so closely copied from "Pépé le Moko" that look-alikes were cast in many of the roles, and some sequences were followed shot by shot. But "Algiers" is glamorous pop that doesn't compare to the original, directed by Julien Duvivier and starring Jean Gabin as the gangster who finds love but can't find his freedom. No one who saw "Pépé" is likely to forget the scene in which the homesick-for-Paris Gabin looks at a Métro ticket and recites the names of the stations. Ironically, Duvivier had hoped to make an American-style gangster film and had drawn some of his characters from "Scarface." In French.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; March 6-12.)

QUEEN OF THE DAMNED

The late, great R. & B. singer Aaliyah makes her appearance about halfway through this bloodless vampire chronicle based on Anne Rice's wacky novel. Stuart Townsend plays Lestat, the night stalker who awakens the Queen from her slumber with garish rock tunes. The whole film is a swishy, rococo howl—too humorless to be camp (although most of the cast puts on a hysterical Transylvanian accent) and dull beyond reason.—*B.D.* (East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS

After the brilliance of "Rushmore," his levelheaded look at the gifts of a misfit, where could Wes An-

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derson go next? In the event, he has broadened his scope to take in an entire family of misfits: the Tenenbaums, residing in their colorful town house like kooky modern leftovers from the age of Edith Wharton. The parents (Gene Hackman and Anjelica Huston) raised three overachieving children (Ben Stiller, Luke Wilson, and Gwyneth Paltrow) and then separated. The movie, which documents the aftermath, is packed tight with strong, if baffled, feelings, and yet we could be watching it through glass; Anderson specializes in the cool, astringent gaze, and for anyone sick of Hollywood heart-melters this could be the antidote.—*A.L.* (12/17/01) (East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

SCRATCH
It started simply enough: in 1975, Theodore Livingston (a.k.a. GrandWizzard Theodore) was playing music in his Bronx River Houses apartment when his mom yelled at him to turn it down; he grabbed the record with his hand and heard a scratchy noise that sounded kind of cool. Starting from this mythic zero hour, Doug Pray's enthusiastic homage to d.j.s follows the evolution of scratching from an accident to an art form. In its current state, scratching requires an absurd dexterity and a love for mind-melting sonic distortions. One practitioner, Mix Master Mike, tells of a night when he was so freaked out by the sounds emanating from his turntables that he believed he was communicating with intergalactic beings. His story, along with those of other influential turntablists, makes for a rough-sketch history of a style that's now being co-opted by footwear and soft-drink ads. Arriving at this time of relative obscurity for the movement, "Scratch" is one of those prescient social documents like Charlie Ahearn's 1982 "Wild Style," which caught hip-hop in its block-rocking infancy.—*M.A.* (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE SON'S ROOM
The Italian director Nanni Moretti has delved into his darkest material to date and come up with his best film; even here, amazing to report, his customary lightness of touch has not deserted him. Moretti himself stars as a psychiatrist, Giovanni, who is married to the calm and adoring Paola (Laura Morante). They have two children (Jasmine Trinca and Giuseppe Sanfelice), one of whom dies, taking with him the dream of a happy family. Moretti's pacing is hard to fault, as he follows the hairline cracks that widen into gulfs and leave the household looking isolated and loveless. As a case study, the movie adds little to the archives of grief, and rightly so; Moretti is simply drawing up his own distinctively colored map of familiar terrain. In its sharp-etched way, this is no less comic than Moretti's other work, and, for all its sophistication, the comedy is of the primitive kind—that of continuing to live (to jog, to cook, to go to school) when the reason to live has fallen from your hands. In Italian.—*A.L.* (2/4/02) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

STORYTELLING
Another disturbance of the peace from the writer-director Todd Solondz, who made "Welcome to the Dollhouse" and "Happiness." This time, we get a movie split in half, the first part of which concerns a creative-writing student (Selma Blair), thin and white, who dumps her disabled boyfriend and, for good measure, sleeps with her black professor. In the second half, we trace the exploits of a documentary filmmaker (Paul Giamatti) who wants to unearth what the youth of today are doing with themselves in high school. The answer is, more or less, nothing, although we do come across one slacker who would like to be on TV. In short, Solondz presents two tales meant to winkle out the cultural encounters that embarrass us the most, and then twists the knife and leaves us squirming harder than before. It's clever enough, and you could gash yourself on some of the lines, but, when a director is as resolutely ungenerous as Solondz, the end can only come as a relief.—*A.L.* (2/4/02) (Angelika Film Center and BAM Rose Cinemas.)

WENDIGO
This unsettling and odd film, directed by Larry Fessenden, begins with a tight, sharp story about a New York City family who accidentally hit a deer late one night while driving upstate for a vacation. When a group of hunters arrive and are enraged by the death of their prey, the family's fear and paranoia is palpable, and a creepy "Deliverance"-like atmosphere takes hold. But when Fessenden begins to move his film into a more supernatural plane (the Wendigo is a forest spirit), the story collapses into mumbo-jumbo.—*B.D.* (Film Forum.)

WE WERE SOLDIERS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

ALSO PLAYING

BROTHERHOOD OF THE WOLF
Empire 25 and Union Square.

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
59th Street East Cinema and Quad Cinema.

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO
Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3, Eastside Playhouse, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

DONNIE DARKO
Pioneer.

IRIS
Empire 25, Cinema 2, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.

LANTANA
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Quad Cinema, and 64th and 2nd.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING (12/24 & 31/01)
Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.

MULHOLLAND DRIVE (10/15/01)
Cinema Village and Empire 25.

TRAINING DAY
Empire 25 and Village Theatre VII.

TROUBLE EVERY DAY
Quad Cinema.

WHAT TIME IS IT THERE?
Cinema Village.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through March 31: "New York, New York," films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. March 9 at 2: "Nothing Sacred" (†). ♦ March 9 at 4: "The Clock" (1945, Vincente Minnelli). ♦ March 10 at 2: "King Kong" (1933, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack). ♦ March 10 at 4:30: "The Cruise" (1998, Bennet Miller). ♦ Repertory night. March 9-10 at 6:30: "Lola" (1961, Jacques Demy; in French).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—March 6-12: The New York Underground Film Festival. See www.nyuff.com for complete details.

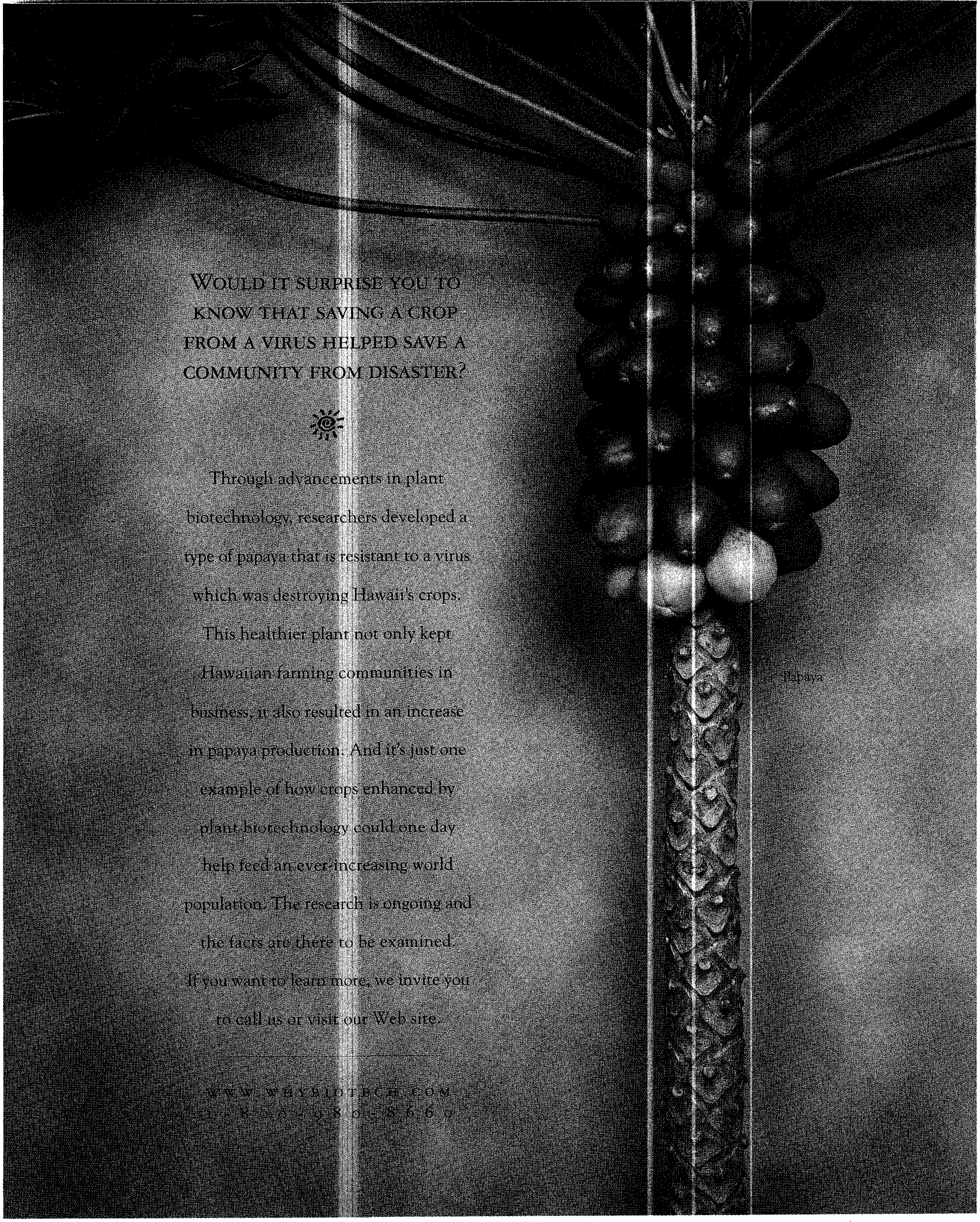
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—March 7 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Wide Blue Road" (1957, Gillo Pontecorvo; in Italian). ♦ March 8 at 2, 4:30, 6:50 and 9:10: "Lust for Life" (1956, Vincente Minnelli). ♦ March 9 at 6:50 and 9:10: "On Dangerous Ground" (†). ♦ March 9-10: The BAMkids Film Festival. ♦ March 10 at 6:50 and 9:10: "Julius Caesar" (†). ♦ A tribute to Pauline Kael. March 11 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Blow Out" (†). The writer Charles Taylor will introduce the 6:50 screening. ♦ March 12 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Night of the Shooting Stars" (†). The critic David Denby will introduce the 6:50 screening.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through March 14 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Pépé Le Moko" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Films that portray *la vie d'artiste*. March 12 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "French Cancan" (1954, Jean Renoir; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through April 30: "The First Decade: Video from the EAI Archives," selected video art from the collection of Electronic Arts Intermix. See www.moma.org for complete details. ♦ Films from Africa. March 8 at 8:15: "The Lion Has Seven Heads" (1970, Glauber Rocha; in Portuguese and several other languages).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Starting March 8: "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema." March 8 at 1 and 6:15 and March 9 at 1:30: "Read My Lips" (2001, Jacques Audiard). ♦ March 8 at 3:30 and March 10 at 3:45: "God Is Great, I'm Not" (2001, Pascale Bailly). ♦ March 8 at 9:15, March 9 at 4:15, and March 11 at 3:30: "Wimbledon Stage" (2001, Mathieu Amalric). ♦ March 9 at 6:45 and March 10 at 1 and 9: "Cet Amour-Là" (2001, Josée Dayan). ♦ March 9 at 9:30 and March 12 at 3:30 and 9: "The Pornographer" (2001, Bertrand Bonello). ♦ March 10 at 6:15 and March 12 at 1 and 6:15: "Inch'Allah Dimanche" (2001, Yamina Benguigui). ♦ March 11 at 1 and 6:15: "Chaos" (2001, Coline Serreau). ♦ March 11 at 8:45: "Loin (Far Away)" (2001, André Téchiné).



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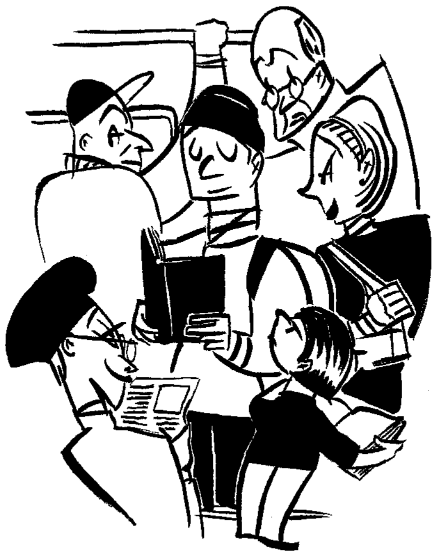
COMMENT
READ ALL ABOUT IT

Things may be a bit better. Spring-training games have begun, the very early forsythia already feels old, and here's a nice ongoing book fight to brighten your mornings. As the Chicago *Tribune* reports, Nancy Pearl, the executive director of the Washington Center for the Book, in Seattle, started the whole thing back in 1998, when she proposed that everybody in town read the same book at the same time. Within days, it seemed, all Seattle was nose-down into the Russell Banks novel "The Sweet Hereafter" (selected, perhaps, for its bad weather), while other literocentric burgs hurried to fall into line. A Chicago group, One Book One Chicago, settled on Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," and tens of thousands of local readers (by the estimate of Mary Dempsey, the commissioner of the Chicago Public Library) fell happily or doggedly into that famous good read, suppressing guilty flick-memories of Gregory Peck's tilting, anti-injustice chin and Robert Duvall's scary Boo Radley shamble. Since then, San Francisco has picked "The Grapes of Wrath" as its all-aboard reader, Milwaukee is going for David Guterson's "Snow Falling on Cedars," Los Angeles and Palm Beach County are in love with "Fahrenheit 451" (nifty hot weather-cum-literacy theme-paper op there), and Cleveland, Colorado Springs, and Valparaiso, Indiana, have cravenly or brilliantly jumped aboard the Harper Lee bandwagon.

Literary New York, swiftly recognizing the underfunded pallor and nervous glances of the out-of-town reading-is-good-for-you bunch, did not disappoint. Ann Douglas, a Columbia University professor and the author of "The Feminization of American Culture," told the *Times*, "Chicago is different. The New Yorker disdains to be a booster of his own city or of his own culture. That is for the provinces. . . . We are the most important group of readers and critics in the country and even possibly in the world." Harold Bloom, the eminent canoneer, agreed: "I don't like these mass reading bees. . . . It is rather like the idea that we are all going to pop out and eat Chicken McNuggets or something else horrid at once." And Phillip Lopate, the editor of "Writing New York," offered, "It's a little like . . . 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers' or something."



Yess.

"They basically called us hicks," Christine Rodrick, the assistant press secretary for the Chicago Public Library, cried to the *Tribune*. "What is their *prob*lem?" (unfair italics added) quavered Jordan Miller, the co-owner of Chicago Academy Publishing. New York, of course, then went infuriatingly ahead and picked its own mass-read candidate, chosen, after some haggling, by an ad-hoc committee of educators, librarians, and booksellers: Chang-rae Lee's "Native Speaker," a 1995 first novel about a Korean-American immigrant who immerses himself in the corrupt politics of Queens. Perfect—which is to say perfectly non-uniting. The New York Women's Agenda is concerned that "Native Speaker" isn't brisk enough to hold the attention of high-school students, and may also offend some Asian-Americans. Savvy pickers here predict that the N.Y.W.A.'s counter-choice, if any, will not feature a certain dead white whale. Meantime, other known book readers hastened forward in *New York* with endorsements or rips of rival candidate novels, like James McBride's "The Color of Water" and E. L. Doctorow's "Ragtime," and with

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

nominees of their own. Susan Sontag: “ ‘Sleepless Nights,’ by Elizabeth Hardwick, [is a] book of dreams and memories, both true and false.” Norman Mailer: “U.S.A.,” by John Dos Passos. Jimmy Breslin: “ ‘The Color of Water’ is a piece of shit.”

The wrangle suggests a common and heartening local scene, when a crowd of hard-bitten native New Yorkers surrounds a family of lost tourists on the street and falls into argument over the best way to get the visitors to Macy’s. “No, no, don’t send them by bus, they ain’t got all day. They grab the Q or the W and they’re there in six minutes.” “Nah, Jesus—you’re putting them in the *subway*? Don’t go listening to him, mister.” Only a depressive or a collector of Henry Roth could fail to find other happy reassurances amid the hurt and blurt, starting with the evidence that New York has begun to shed its recent, ill-fitting mantle of victimhood and can be hated as before. This city, for another thing, remains the capital of Book Gab, a growth industry that may have already swallowed up actual reading in its impetuous rise. Sold-out SoHo poetry readings and short-story performances are still meet-’n’-date hotspots for the gloomily garbed bookish young, while their older counterparts sustain delicious bloodlettings over their competing weekday reading groups: “No, we’ve finished with ‘Phèdre,’ at least for the time being, and we’re nicely along into John of the Cross. And you—still doing your Hardy novels with that City College fellow?”

“It was always the poems—as you know perfectly well. . . .”

Some people live in New York or stay on in New York for such heady exchanges, and others perhaps only for the mysteriously pleasurable sight of a stranger on the morning subway or the evening bus slithering into an empty seat or getting a good grip on a pole and then deeply resuming his or her paperback of “The Counterlife” or “Glitz” or “The Vampire Lestat” or “The Idiot” or “All the Pretty Horses” or “A Journal of the Plague Year,” or, most likely of all, a book you’ve never heard of. (Lady, that guy peering and squinting over your shoulder may only want to know what you’re reading.) The mystery is why a private reader in a public space should exude a shared, communal sense of bliss, while that CD Discman listener twisting his shoulders to an unheard beat, and the cell-phoner smiling at something he’s been told, spread irritation and loneliness among their riding neighbors.

The rush-hour book watch can also produce unexpected intimacies. The other day, a man standing next to a young woman I know, northbound from West Fourth Street on the F train, nodded at her copy of Harold Brodkey’s “First Love and Other Sorrows,” and said, “Saddest writer.” And another woman (my wife, to be exact) keeps the memory of a man moving past her to alight from their Eighty-sixth Street crosstown bus suddenly giving a thumbs-up at the sight of her “Can You Forgive Her?” and then shaking his head over the fate of Trollope’s doomed and dashing antihero. “Poor Burgo Fitzgerald,” he said, smiling, and disappeared. She went on with the book. In the end, this is probably what mass city reading is all about, in Manhattan or Chicago or Medellín—the crosstown moment of silence and connection, two-thirds of the way down the left-hand page, when we are again alone with the author and his slightly jiggling perfect thought.

—*Roger Angell*

DOUBLE DEPT.
A BEAUTIFUL HAND

Dave Bayer’s hands are broad and slightly hairy, with wide thumbs and a few small scabs—abrasions from a recent rock-climbing trip. At first glance, they’re nothing special, but when viewed from certain angles they look a lot like Russell Crowe’s. “They’re not so dissimilar,” Bayer, a forty-six-year-old mathematics professor at Barnard College, said the other day, resting his palms on the living-room table in his apartment on Riverside Drive. “Russell’s hands are a shade stouter than mine. He’s a very athletic guy. I try to be, but you should see him at the gym.”

Bayer discovered this manual affinity while working on the film “A Beautiful Mind,” which stars Crowe as the mathematician John Forbes Nash, Jr. The director, Ron Howard, hired Bayer as the film’s math consultant after reading Bayer’s review—in *Notices of the American Mathematical Society*—of the play “Proof,” which also explores mathematical genius and madness. (Mary-Louise Parker “convincingly traverses a two-dimensional parameter space of personas,” Bayer raved.)

It was in rehearsals that Bayer’s role took on an extra dimension. “We noticed that Russell Crowe and I had very similar handwriting, and then Ron says, ‘Put your hands out,’ ” Bayer recalled. “At which point Ron said, ‘You’re the hand double.’ And I didn’t know what that meant.” What it meant was that Bayer’s hand, made up to match Crowe’s, appeared in closeups shot by the film’s second unit.

It took Bayer a while to start thinking like a hand double. Early on, he trimmed his fingernails, even though Crowe was growing his nails longer to make them look more like Nash’s, so Bayer had to wear acrylic tips for much of the shoot.

“The cool thing is I got to be the hand double for things that had nothing to do with math,” Bayer said. “In the Pentagon scene, where they’re moving markers on a map, the closeup where you can actually make out the name of the city—that was my hand.” Bayer also appears in full, albeit briefly, as a professor at the Princeton faculty club.

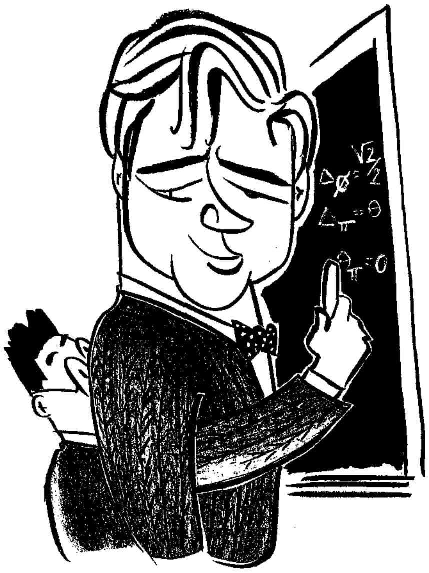
“Russell does all his own math,” Bayer said. “He just can’t be there all the time. I do the math while he’s busy getting made up as a seventy-year-old.” Bayer thinks Crowe acquitted himself well in his blackboard scenes. “If you’re not a mathematician, it’s a high-wire act delivering your lines beautifully and writing math equations at the same time,” Bayer said.

As the math consultant, Bayer remained on the main set whenever a shot involved mathematics so that he could check the math and answer any questions Crowe might have. “He’d say something like ‘I know that the math in this lecture is crazy, but does it feel to you like I’m giving a math lecture?’ And I’d say, ‘Yeah.’ ”

Bayer also wrote the equations that appear on windows and blackboards in the film, which was painstaking work, even for a professional mathematician.

For one scene, he spent six hours preparing the calculations. "I'd probably gone over the board seven times, and then Russell comes in and looks at it and says, 'Why don't you have me erase this?' " They had only one shot, and Crowe nailed it. The scene lasts just seconds in the movie. "The fact that I spent six hours on what's actually two seconds is not out of line with how films get made," Bayer said.

To most viewers of "A Beautiful Mind," the numbers and Greek letters register as mere set dressing, but mathematicians can follow Nash's story on another plane. In the film, Nash struggles to prove the Riemann hypothesis, one of the great unsolved math problems. Bayer chose an unorthodox path for Nash to work on Riemann's hypothesis, because it made sense for the character.

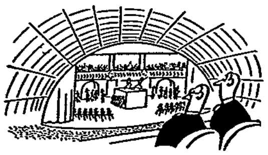


Russell Crowe and helping hand.

The real John Nash wrote to Bayer after seeing "A Beautiful Mind." "Nash commented that there was math later in the film that he never knew or thought about," Bayer said. "But, of course, it's fictionalized." In particular, Nash wanted to know about a scene in which the character Nash, heavily medicated, shows an old Princeton classmate a clipboard with pages and pages of numbers on it. "It was supposed to be in some sense numerological gibberish, but he had the sense that it wasn't quite gibberish, and he wanted me to say what it was." And Nash was right, Bayer said: "It wasn't quite gibberish."

—*Blake Eskin*

DEPT. OF DELAY
A GEHRY FOR LOS ANGELES



Even if you are the most acclaimed architect in the world, it isn't always easy to turn your ideas into real buildings. In 1988, Frank Gehry was hired to design a new hall for the Los Angeles Philharmonic; it was to be funded by Lillian Disney, Walt Disney's widow, who put up fifty million dollars so that the hall could be named for her husband. More than a decade later, construction still had not started. A lot of people in Los Angeles weren't sure that the city was ready for Gehry's design, which on the outside looks like a series of billowing stainless-steel sails. The auditorium Gehry designed was to have windows, skylights, and a curved ceiling of Douglas fir. Gehry placed the orchestra pretty much in the middle, the way it is at the Berlin Philharmonic, a 1963 concert hall that is about as Gehryesque as a building can be without being designed by Gehry himself. (It was designed by Hans Scharoun.)

Gehry has lived and worked in Los Angeles since 1947, but, like many other architects, he has been a prophet without honor in his own land. For years, the Disney hall was held up by disputes over whether Gehry's office had the expertise to build it, or whether he needed to be forced into a shotgun marriage with a commercial architect who could oversee some of the more daunting technical details. It wasn't until Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao opened, in 1997, that the cultural establishment of Los Angeles realized that if Gehry could get that building done on his own, halfway across the world, he ought to be able to get this one built in his own back yard, and it would be a major embarrassment to the city if it didn't let its most famous architect go ahead with what could well become Los Angeles's most important contemporary building.

Construction of the Walt Disney Concert Hall finally started in 1999, and it will open in the fall of 2003. The other day, Gehry, Esa-Pekka Salonen, the orchestra's conductor, and Deborah Borda, the managing director, came to New York to show off the plans for the hall at a lunch at Cello, on the Upper East Side. It felt less like the presentation of a building project than like a meeting of a support group for people who had gone through a particular kind of agony together.

"When the project ran into trouble—well, I just have to thank all of you," Gehry said. "Esa-Pekka said, 'If you don't build it, I will leave.' And then Diane Disney Miller said she would leave, too."

"Well, I didn't say that exactly," said Miller, Walt Disney's daughter, who was sitting on Gehry's left. "I just told them that they had to do it Frank's way. I couldn't leave."

Gehry wanted to design the building, he said, not only because he had never had a major project in Los Angeles but also because he loved the idea of having Salonen as a client. "One day, Esa-Pekka said to me, 'If architecture is frozen music, is music liquid architecture?' " Gehry said. He added that Salonen taught him "how a musician can enter a room and sense the aural qualities the way I can enter a room and sense the visual qualities," and he became fascinated with the idea of trying to turn his own visual sensibilities toward sound.

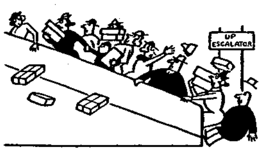
Gehry worked with an acoustician, Yasuhisa Toyota, of Nagata Acoustics in Tokyo, and their relationship seems to have had none of the tension that usually marks collaborations between a strong-willed architect and a strong-willed acoustician. "Every step Frank would take, he would ask me if it was right," Toyota said.

"Dr. Toyota promised me that it would be the best hall that ever was or ever will be," Gehry said. "So if we die, we will die big." He and Toyota decided not to make the Disney hall's acoustics dependent on a system of movable panels, the way many new concert halls are designed, which theoretically allows the room to be "tuned," or adjusted for different orchestras and different pieces of music. "There are too many variables when you do that," Salonen said. "If you have a hundred panels and you're doing a Brahms symphony, are you really going to change it for the next piece? Usually the orchestra decides to leave it in one place, and that's that."

Gehry's hall was not the sort of architecture that Lillian Disney, who died in 1997, had in mind when she first opened her checkbook. If her taste could be described in terms of Disneyland, you might say it was more Main Street than Tomorrowland. "Diane's mother had trouble with my design, but she was very nice about it," Gehry said. "She loved gardens and flowers, and she had a collection of all kinds of—I guess you would have to call them tchotchkes, like Delft china. I promised her that we would make a garden as part of the project, and the garden will have a fountain in the shape of a rose, made of pieces of blue and white china, and it will be a memorial to her."

—*Paul Goldberger*

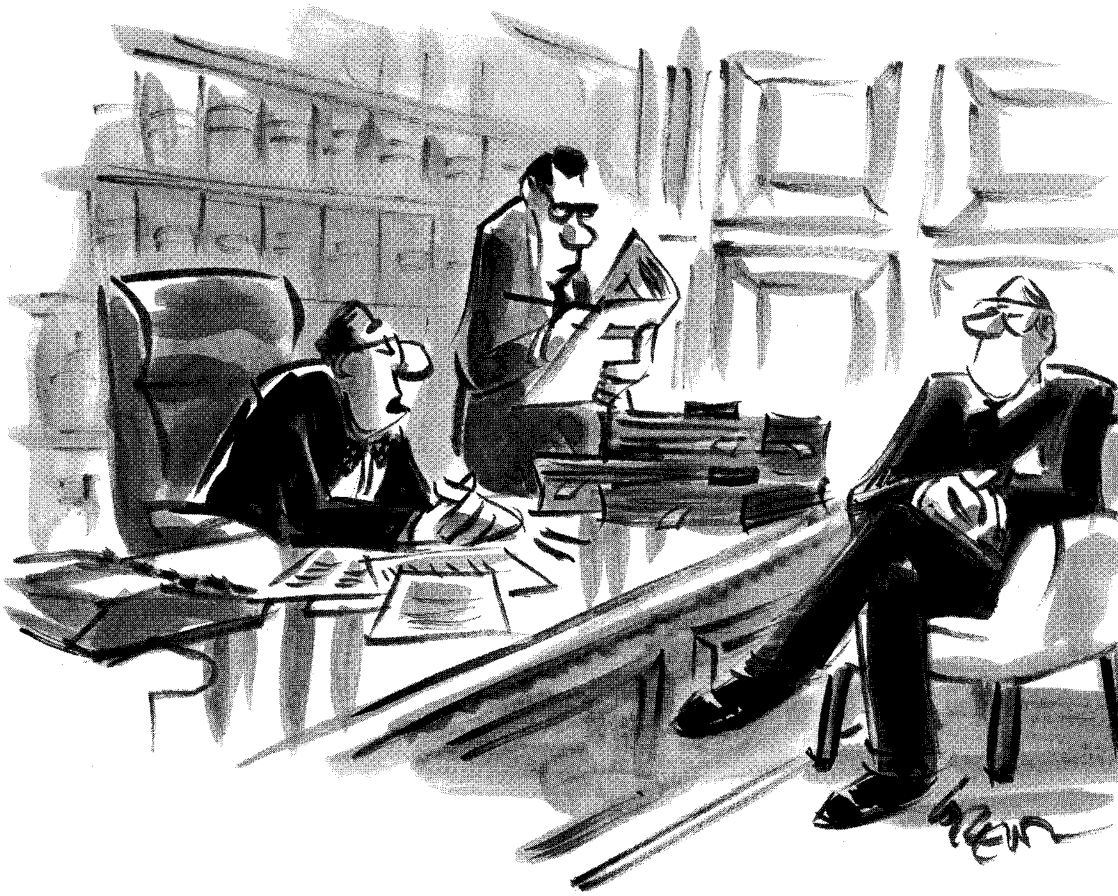
OFF THE RACK
FANCY PANTS IN PORTLAND



Shopping in Maine is usually synonymous with the outlet villages in Kittery and Freeport, but for the past several months Maine's shopping epicenter has been Marden's, a cut-rate retailer in a strip mall on the outskirts of Portland. Marden's acquires its stock via closeout, bankruptcy, and salvage, and as such is a repository for a curious amalgam of stuff: computer software, pickaxes, air-hockey tables, giant Tootsie Rolls. Recently, it has also offered a trove of high-end designer clothing salvaged from Century 21, the discount department store that was damaged in the collapse of the World Trade Center and that reopened last week.

About two weeks after the attacks, Harold Andrew (Ham) Marden, the president of Marden's, got a call from Century 21's insurers, inviting him to bid on the store's merchandise, which, as a result of the attacks, now belonged to them. Marden drove down to New York the next day and spent hours combing through the darkened Century 21 stockrooms with a flashlight. Eventually, Marden and another buyer agreed to split the entire inventory—clothing, shoes, luggage, and more. During the next few weeks, more than twenty tractor-trailers rumbled up to Maine, full of merchandise that was soon distributed to Marden's nine stores throughout the state. "Most of the clothing is what I call Middle America stuff—Ralph Lauren polo shirts, navy-blue suits, that sort of thing—and that's what most of our stores got," Marden says. "Maybe twenty per cent is what I'd call fast or stylish—some of it is downright strange—and that's what went to the Portland store."

The first wave of women's stock, in November, filled Marden's racks with Armani, Prada, Gucci, Moschino, Versace, Romeo Gigli, Dolce & Gabbana, and other designer labels—at sixty-six per cent off Century 21's already heavily discounted prices. Local shoppers, in their anoraks and Bean boots, rose to the challenge. Women piled John Galliano leather suits ($3,600 retail, $500 at Marden's) and Gucci jackets ($1,275 retail, $150 at Marden's) into rusting shopping carts and waited twelve deep at the fitting rooms, or carted armloads of clothing to remote regions of the store and improvised changing areas between displays of basketballs and steering-wheel locks. Some of the items still bore the residue of September 11th. A rack of men's overcoats by Donna Karan and Bill Blass appeared one day, collars and shoulders covered with white



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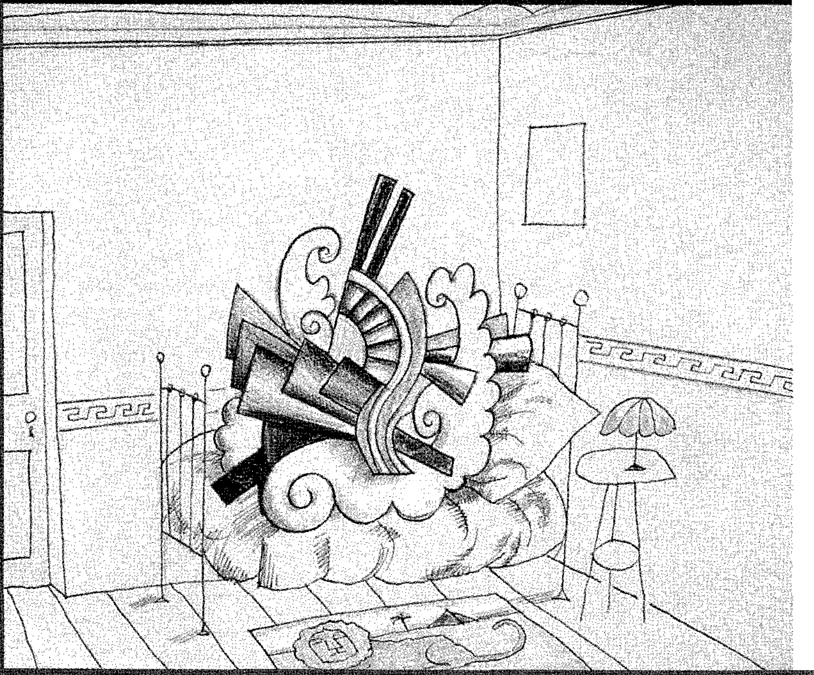

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RANDOM HOUSE

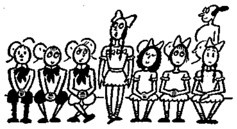
dust. The same chalky layer coated many of the men's shoes. Yet the buyers kept coming, from all over the Northeast, some even from New York. By last week, there wasn't much left, but you could still find, say, a see-through leopard-print Dolce & Gabbana top for six dollars.

Yodit Gule, a pharmacist in her early thirties who immigrated to Portland from Ethiopia, spent two thousand dollars on her first trip to see the Century 21 merchandise at Marden's. She and her older sister, Shetaye, who is also a pharmacist—four other sisters are pharmacists, too—began taking clothing orders from family members around the country. The Gule clan eventually racked up more than forty thousand dollars' worth of merchandise. "You just don't see these kinds of clothes in Maine—it's sad that they got to Portland for the reason they did, but you have to get them while they're here," Yodit said. "I wish I could say I'm done, but I'm obsessed. Every time I go, I see more nice stuff, and it's even more affordable." On a recent visit, she bought an Alexander McQueen leather coat ($2,450 retail, $180 at Marden's) and a rose-colored sequinned silk dress by Anna Molinari ($900 retail, $109 at Marden's). Yodit is particularly excited about the Molinari, even though she suspects that she won't get a lot of use out of it. "I'll maybe wear it to weddings and when I travel to New York, but that's probably all," she said. "They don't wear this kind of thing here in Maine, you know."

A Mainer, at Marden's.

—*Scott Sutherland*

FIRST NIGHT OUT
KINDS OF KIDS



If you attend private school in Manhattan, by the time you're in the sixth grade you have probably heard of the Goddard Gaieties. These are dances—one or two each year—that are held for middle-school students in the basement of either the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, at Eighty-fourth and Park, or the Unitarian Church of All Souls, at Eightieth and Lexington. A ticket costs forty-five dollars and supports the good works of the Goddard Riverside Community Center.

A few Fridays ago, at a sixth-grade Gaiety at All Souls, the boys—from Allen-Stevenson, Browning, Buckley, Collegiate, St. Bernard's, and St. David's—were working hard to look as if they didn't care whether they were there. The girls—from Brearley, Chapin, Hewitt, Marymount, Nightingale-Bamford, Sacred Heart, and Spence—were excited to be out of uniform.

As girls and boys checked in at separate tables, an eleven-year-old from Collegiate, who wore a down vest despite the clammy heat of the All Souls basement, offered himself as a guide to the proceedings.

"Everywhere you look here, there are really girlie girls and the not-as-girlie girls," he said. "The girlie girls wear dark-pink tank tops that stop above their belly button. They have some sort of accessory, like a little bag. They have shoes with very high heels and very low-hanging jeans that they have to pull up every two minutes. Most are on the short side or nearly six feet tall. They rule the dance.

"The not-so-girlie girls are around average height. They also wear jeans, but not as low. They don't have any accessories—at least, not a handbag. Instead of dancing around in little posses or hovering around one boy, they just cruise around the dance floor, maybe with one or two friends."

By then, some of the not-so-girlie girls had climbed onto a stage at the center of the room, where they stood scream-singing to the music. The Collegiate anthropologist continued, "Sacred Heart: showoffy; Chapin: uppity; Spence: self-absorbed; Hewitt: what's the word for always thinking about how you look? Oh, yeah, 'vain.' "

A classmate with black hair and metal-framed glasses walked up, and the boy went on, "There are three kinds of boys: players—although they're not called players."

"Right," the boy in glasses said.

"They're usually the ones the girlie girls flock to. They're either jocks or popular at their own school. Then there are rowdy boys: these are the ones who fight with kids from schools that rival their own, like Collegiate and Buckley. They're often part of the player crowd. They dress in showoffy rap clothes, and most of the time one article of clothing has to do with skateboarding."

The two boys then described the third group but couldn't come up with a name for it. "You can't call them 'regular,' because then it seems like everyone else is irregular," the boy in the down vest said. "For the same reason, you can't call them 'normal.' Just say 'everyone else.' "

"Yeah," his friend said.

"Everyone else usually stays in groups of two, three, or four, occasionally dancing, but not with girls."

And he wanted to clarify a point. "There's one thing that is so, so important to understand," he said. "There is no such thing as an interschool posse." His friend nodded gravely.

At eight-fifty-five, three parent chaperones hustled to a corner of the room. "Throwing-up kid!" one of them shouted. "What do we do?"

A father in a business suit grabbed several coatracks and pushed them in the direction of the sick boy, presumably to shield him from the scrutiny of his peers. What happened, of course, was that the sixth graders were instead alerted to his precise whereabouts. A crowd gathered around the coatracks, while out on the dance floor three young couples slow-danced.

At nine o'clock, the students were dismissed, school by school. The two Collegiate boys seemed pleased with their night out. "I want to go to all of these dances," the first one said. "I like girls. Some of my friends aren't up to the point of liking girls yet."

His friend agreed: "I like the casual atmosphere. No tie and jacket."

—*Lisa Birnbach*

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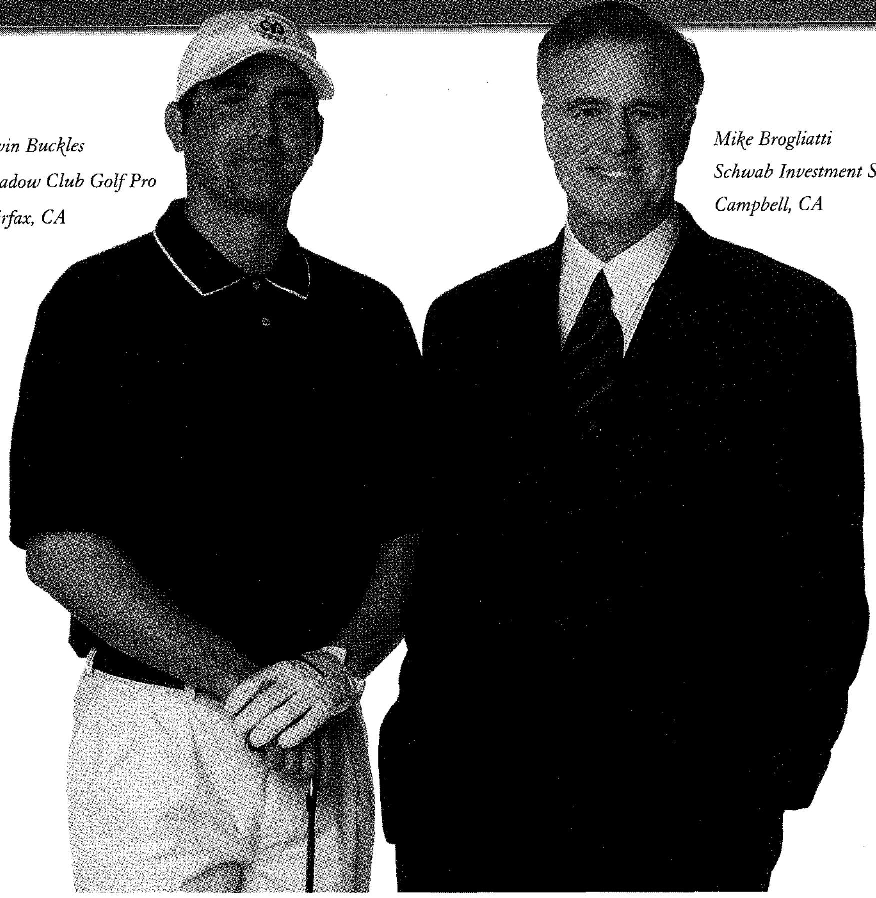

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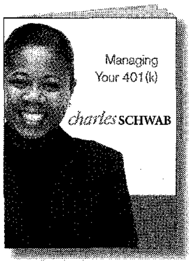

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ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

THE DEBATE WITHIN

The objective is clear—topple Saddam. But how?

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

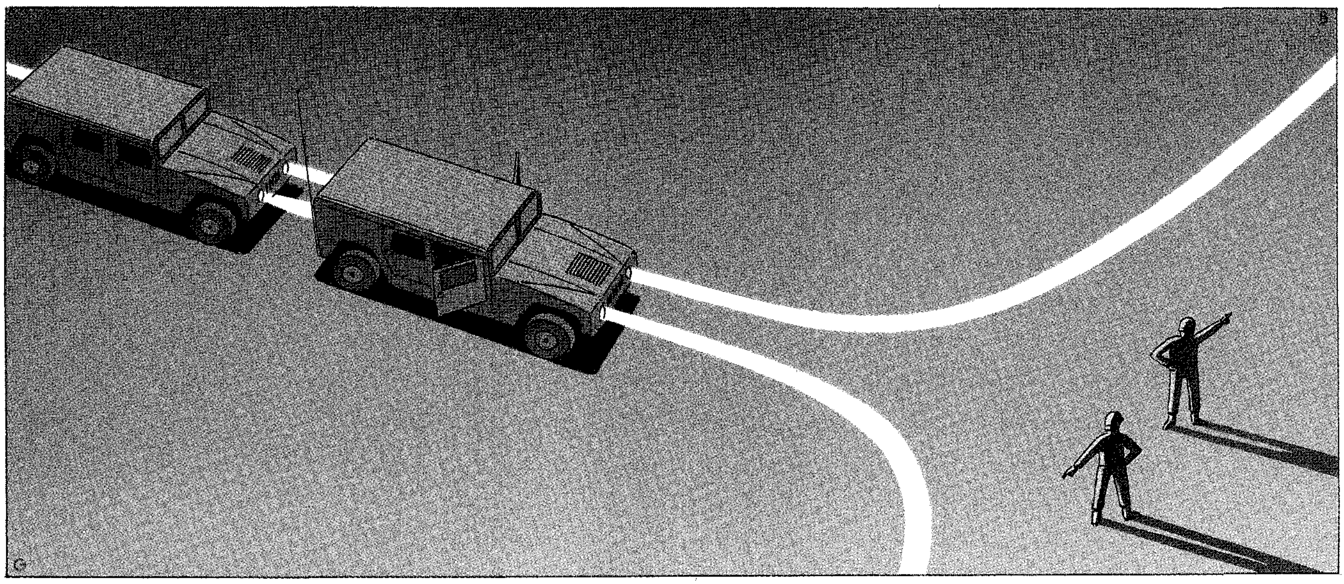
After a year of bitter infighting, the Bush Administration remains sharply divided about Iraq. There is widespread agreement that Saddam Hussein must be overthrown, but no agreement about how to get it done. The President has given his feuding agencies a deadline of April 15th to come up with a "coagulated plan," as one senior State Department official put it, for ending the regime. The President is expecting to meet that month with Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, whose support for the Iraqi operation is considered essential.

There is strong debate over how many American troops would be needed, whether Baghdad should be immediately targeted, which Iraqi opposition leader should be installed as the interim leader, and—most important—how the Iraqi military will respond to an attack: Will it retreat, and even turn against Saddam? Or will it stand and fight? There is also no certainty about how Israel will respond if Saddam launches weapons of mass destruction toward Tel Aviv and Jerusalem—as many officials believe he will do, or try to do, once an American invasion takes place.

The normal planning procedures have been marginalized, according to many military and intelligence officials. These usually include a series of careful preliminary studies under the control of the National Security Council and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But now there is far less involvement by the Joint Chiefs and their chairman, Air Force General Richard Myers. As one senior Administration consultant put it, the military's planning for Iraq is operating "under V.F.R. direct"—that is, under visual flight rules, an air-traffic controllers' term for proceeding with minimal guidance.

The interagency dispute has, at times, become personal. The Pentagon's conservative and highly assertive civilian leadership, assembled by Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, has extraordinary influence in George W. Bush's Washington. These civilians have been the most vigorous advocates for early action against Saddam Hussein, arguing that his access to weapons of mass destruction, and his proven willingness to use them, make him a threat to world security. The leaders of the State Department, who are more restrained in their planning, accuse the Pentagon civilians of confusing dissent with disloyalty; Pentagon officials, in turn, accuse Secretary of State Colin Powell and his deputy, Richard Armitage, of a loss of nerve. "It's the return of the right-wing crazies, crawling their way back," one of Armitage's associates said, referring to Wolfowitz's team. "The knives are out." One senior State Department official angrily told me that he would "meet them"—his "pissant" detractors in the Pentagon—"anytime, anywhere." In return, one of those detractors depicted the State Department's behavior as "unbelievably personal and vitriolic. Their attitude is that we're yahoos—especially those of us who come from the far right. The American Enterprise Institute"—a conservative think tank in Washington—"is like Darth Vader's mother ship for them."

Senior State Department officials are said to be particularly displeased with William Luti, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Near East and South Asian Affairs. Luti, a retired Navy captain and Gulf War combat veteran who served on Vice-President Dick Cheney's staff last summer, is seen by people at State as so obsessed with an immediate overthrow of Saddam that he hasn't thought through the consequences. Luti's supporters, however, include Richard Perle, who was an Assis-



"We've got a bunch of people involved who think it's going to be easy," a retired military officer said. "We're set up for a big surprise."

GUY BILLOUT

tant Secretary of Defense in the Reagan Administration and now heads the Defense Policy Board, a Pentagon advisory group. Perle was one of Bush's early foreign-policy advisers in the Presidential campaign, and his views, which reflect the thinking of the Republican right, are taken seriously in Washington.

In previous Administrations, such interagency fights were often resolved by the national-security adviser, now Condoleezza Rice. But the National Security Council has been weakened recently by a series of resignations and reassignments, some of them said to be the result of internal bickering. The N.S.C. currently has no senior Iraq expert on its staff. Bruce Riedel, the longtime ranking expert on the Middle East, moved overseas recently on a sabbatical, and the person who recently filled in as the N.S.C.'s Iraq expert, an intelligence officer on loan from the C.I.A., went back to the agency after only a few months at the White House. A third regional expert left the N.S.C. this winter after a series of policy disputes with civilian officials in the Pentagon. With no replacement in sight, a former official told me, the N.S.C. has been forced to "farm out" papers on important issues to the C.I.A. and the State Department.

The difficulty in coördination, Administration officials said, is apparent in some of the proposals for Saddam's overthrow now being circulated. One plan that has been enthusiastically endorsed by the civilian leadership in the Pentagon, revolving around a small, mobile attack force of Iraqi dissidents and American Special Forces, and the declaration of an interim government, was derided by a top State Department official, who told me that it was little more than "a concept." Another plan, proposed by the C.I.A., which called for increased covert operations against Saddam and continued diplomacy while issues of invasion timing and force structure are worked out, was debunked by a former C.I.A. station chief as hardly different from the plans of the past decade.

The N.S.C.'s lack of high-level expertise on Iraq has created a planning void which is now being filled by retired Army General Wayne Downing, an expert on special operations. President Bush brought Downing in after September 11th as an adviser on combatting terrorism. The General has also served as an ad-hoc adviser to the Iraqi National Congress, the most prominent Iraqi opposition group. Both Perle and Luti argue that any move against Iraq should involve the I.N.C. and its leader, Ahmad Chalabi, who, with the C.I.A., planned a coup attempt that failed against Saddam in 1995.

Downing recently hired Linda Flohr, a twenty-seven-year veteran of the C.I.A.'s clandestine service who, after retiring in 1994—her last assignment was for the top-secret Iraqi Operations Group—went to work for the Rendon Group, a public-relations firm that was retained by the C.I.A. in 1991 to handle press issues related to the Iraqi opposition, including Chalabi and the I.N.C. The firm, headed by John Rendon, who once served as executive director of the Democratic National Committee, was paid close to a hundred million dollars by the C.I.A. over the next five years, according to an I.N.C. official. Last fall, the Rendon Group was retained by the Defense Department to give advice on how to counter what the government considered to be "disinformation" about the American war effort in Afghanistan. The firm was also retained by the Pentagon's Office of Strategic Influence, which was eliminated last week after the *Times* reported that it would provide foreign reporters with "news items, possibly even false ones." (Rendon's contract with the Pentagon was not cancelled, however.) Flohr also worked for a private business—it manufactured bulletproof vests—founded by Oliver North, the former marine and Reagan Administration N.S.C. aide who was fired for his role in the Iran-Contra scandal.

While the feuding continues in Washington, exile groups supported by the I.N.C. have been conducting sabotage operations inside Iraq, targeting oil refineries and other installations. The latest attack took place on January 23rd, an I.N.C. official told me, when missiles fired by what he termed "indigenous dissidents" struck the large Baiji refinery complex, north of Baghdad, triggering a fire that blazed for more than twelve hours. (The I.N.C. gets operating funds from the United States under legislation passed in 1998. Last fall, the State Department Inspector General conducted a

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review into how the I.N.C. had handled two recent grants, which totalled more than four million dollars. The review found that the I.N.C.'s accounting practices and internal controls were inadequate, and raised questions about more than two million dollars in expenses.)

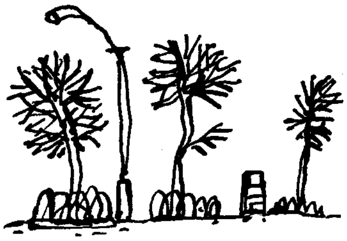
A dispute over Chalabi's potential usefulness preoccupies the bureaucracy, as the civilian leadership in the Pentagon continues to insist that only the I.N.C. can lead the opposition. At the same time, a former Administration official told me, "Everybody but the Pentagon and the office of the Vice-President wants to ditch the I.N.C." The I.N.C.'s critics note that Chalabi, despite years of effort and millions of dollars in American aid, is intensely unpopular today among many elements in Iraq. "If Chalabi is the guy, there could be a civil war after Saddam's overthrow," one former C.I.A. operative told me. A former high-level Pentagon official added, "There are some things that a President can't order up, and an internal opposition is one. Show me a Northern Alliance"—the opposition group in Afghanistan that, with United States help, scored early victories against the Taliban—"and then we can argue about what it will cost to back it up."

The C.I.A. and the State Department are now accelerating their efforts to forge a coalition of former Iraqi military men and opposition groups, with the goal of convincing the steadfast Chalabi supporters that a new approach could work—without I.N.C. involvement. The key participants, known to some C.I.A. officials as the "gang of four," include representatives from the fiercely anti-Saddam Patriotic Union of Kurdistan; its archrival, the Kurdistan Democratic Party; the pro-Iran Supreme Islamic Council for Revolution in Iraq, a Shiite resistance group; and the Iraqi National Accord, headed by Ayad Allawi, a doctor who left Iraq in the seventies. The factions are now meeting regularly in London, and the long-sought concept of a broad opposition—without Chalabi—is "gaining mass," a former C.I.A. operative said, in part because of what other Iraqis see as Chalabi's arrogance and high-handedness. "Chalabi has succeeded in galvanizing the opposition against him," according to one intelligence official.

In recent months, Allawi and a number of former Iraqi military officers have attended meetings—more like auditions—with C.I.A. officials in various hotels in suburban Virginia, and a large conference of Iraqi exiles is planned for later this month in Washington. The C.I.A.'s brightest prospect, officials told me, is Nizar Khazraji, a former Iraqi Army chief of staff who defected in the mid-nineties. As a Sunni and a former combat general, Khazraji is viewed by the C.I.A. as being far more acceptable to the Iraqi officer corps than Chalabi, a Shiite who left Iraq in 1958. Chalabi earned a doctorate in mathematics from the University of Chicago and established a large bank in Jordan. He has no formal military background. A former station chief for the C.I.A. in the Middle East told me, "It would be ridiculous to tie our wagon to Chalabi. He's got no credibility in the region."

Chalabi and his allies have, in recent months, endorsed what amounts to a public-relations campaign against Khazraji, alleging that he was involved in a war crime—the 1988 Iraqi gassing of a Kurdish town, a claim Khazraji denies—and suggesting that he may be a double agent. "There's a huge firestorm over Chalabi that's preventing us from reaching out to the Iraqi military," a former C.I.A. operative told me. "It's mind-boggling for an outsider to understand the impasse."

More than five hundred thousand American soldiers took part in the Gulf War, and, until recently, military planners at the United States Central Command, or CENTCOM, in Tampa, have insisted that at least six combat divisions—roughly a hundred and fifty thousand troops—would be needed for another invasion. CENTCOM's current requirements remain classified, but, in an article just published in *Foreign Affairs*, Kenneth Pollack, the director of Persian Gulf affairs for the N.S.C. during the Clinton Administration, provided the following assessment:



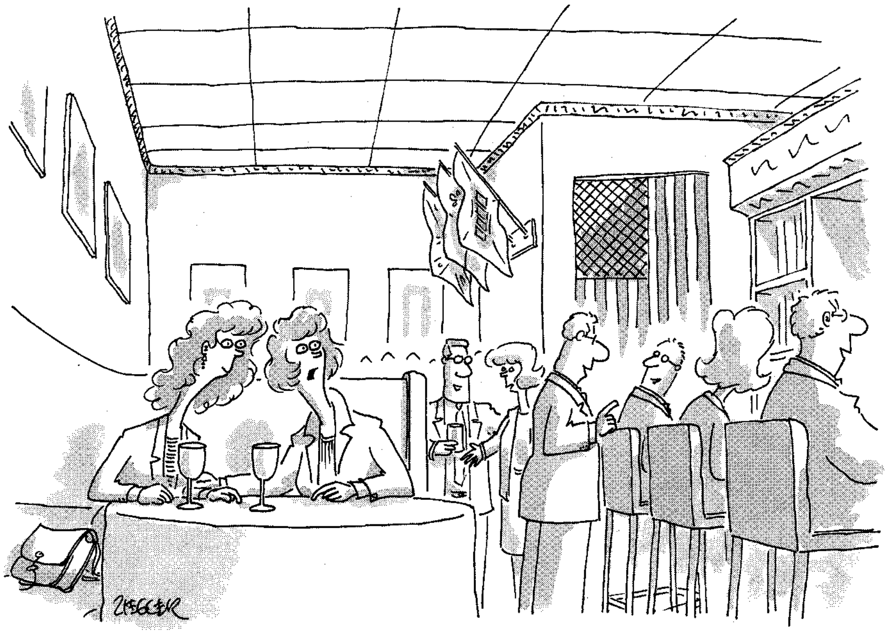
> Some light infantry will be required in case Saddam's loyalists fight in Iraq's cities. Air-mobile forces will be needed to seize Iraq's oil fields at the start of hostilities and to occupy the sites from which Saddam could launch missiles against Israel or Saudi Arabia. And troops will have to be available for occupation duties once the fighting is over. All told, the force should total roughly two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand people; for the invasion, between four and six divisions plus supporting units, and for the air campaign seven hundred to a thousand aircraft and anywhere from one to five carrier battle groups. . . . Building up such a force in the Persian Gulf would take three to five months, but the campaign itself would take probably about a month, including the opening air operations.

General Downing, however, believed even before going to the White House that only a few hundred Americans would be needed to train a small Iraqi opposition force. The plan he helped draw up as a consultant to Chalabi involved the seizure of an airfield and adjacent areas in the south, near many of the nation's rich oil fields; quick neutralization of the area's élite Republican National Guard garrisons, the Army units believed to be most loyal to the Iraqi leader; and the establishment of a no-drive zone in the south. The United States Air Force would also begin systematically bombing key Iraqi command-and-control facilities. In years past, Downing, who ran a Special Forces command during the Gulf War, has criticized the Pentagon for its elaborate planning and heavy-force requirements, telling his I.N.C. colleagues that if five thousand troops could do the job the Pentagon would insist on at least five times as many.

The I.N.C. supporters in and around the Administration, including Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, believe, like Chalabi, that any show of force would immediately trigger a revolt against Saddam within Iraq, and that it would quickly expand. Perle dismisses the widely publicized concerns expressed by Iraq's regional neighbors, who expect prolonged civil war and chaos if the Iraqi Army stands and fights. "Arabs are like most people," Perle told me. "They like winners, and will go with the winners all the time."

The key player in any discussion of

troop needs is Army General Tommy Franks, who, as the head of CENTCOM, would likely be in charge of a war in Iraq—just as he directs the increasingly difficult operation in Afghanistan. So far, senior Administration officials said, Franks is following in the path of his predecessor, Marine General Anthony Zinni, and insisting, despite pressure from civilians in the Pentagon, on an intense and careful American buildup in the region before Iraq can be attacked. "Franks is hanging tough," one of Armitage's associates told me. Marine Corps planners are depicted as less sanguine than their counterparts in the other armed services about the ability of a smaller American force to topple the regime. "The Army and Air Force are ready to go," Armitage's associate told me. "So it's 'Let's go work on the Marines.' The Marines are digging in and are not going to go"—that is, not going to lower estimates of the forces needed.



"Being an accountant gives him that extra aura of danger."

The renewed campaign against Saddam has inevitably quieted those in Washington who believe that the Iraqi Army will fight to the end. One recently retired senior military officer, who drafted CENTCOM battle studies with the Marine leadership, said, "We've got a bunch of people involved who think it's going to be easy. We're set up for a big surprise." A former American ambassador in the Middle East said, "If we have to have three months of bombing, with civilian casualties, we'll have real problems with the Arab world." Scott Ritter, the former marine who led U.N. inspection teams into Iraq during the nineties, predicted that the Iraqi Army would respond to an invasion by dispersing into villages and towns throughout the countryside. In that case, Ritter asked, "What will we do? Flatten the towns?"

Chalabi and his Pentagon supporters have been telling journalists that an attack could come as early as this spring. Any objections from France and Russia, Saddam's major oil-trading partners, would be assuaged, a senior I.N.C. official told me, by assurances that they would be given access to the extraordinarily rich oil fields in southern Iraq. Chalabi has been in contact with American oil companies, the official added, in an effort to insure that the fields get into quick production and provide a source of revenue for the new interim government that the I.N.C. hopes to lead. The French and Russian oil companies "would have to go as junior partners to Americans."

A senior State Department official emphatically denied the possibility that an attack on Saddam's regime could come so soon. "The President has a time line, but it doesn't fit what those boys tell you. The last thing we want to do is hit Baghdad and have Al Qaeda hit Chicago. We'd look real bad." The official added, "When we go to Iraq, we will do it right. There's a before and after, and we want to get the after right." A high-ranking intelligence official similarly noted, referring to Afghanistan, "We aren't done where we are now, and we got plenty to do where we are without biting off something else." A former intelligence official put the issue more vividly. "We're a powerful boa constrictor, and we're now squeezing out these terrorists," he said. "Let's digest these rats we've swallowed before we get another one."

Another timing factor has little to do with the bureaucratic bickering: the Washington *Post* last week quoted Pentagon planners as saying that it would take six months to produce enough precision guidance systems—the key to America's smart bombs—to sustain a full-scale invasion of Iraq. By midsummer, there will be added political pressure from the Germans, who are expected to urge the White House to do nothing in Iraq until after their national elections, in late September. One Iraqi expert said he believes that the government-wide debate over Iraq will be greatly influenced this fall by White House domestic-policy advisers like Karl Rove, who will urge the President not to invade Iraq—as the congressional elections approach—and "to focus instead on domestic politics, as his father did not."

The ostensible theme of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's official visit to Washington in early February was the Palestinian conflict, but there was an important private agenda for the White House: briefing Israel about the President's determination to overthrow Saddam and persuading its leadership to delay a response, as it did during the 1991 Gulf War, in the event of an Iraqi Scud-missile attack. Israel is within range of Scuds coming from western Iraq. Thirty-nine Scuds struck Israel in 1991; despite extensive air and ground searches by United States military commanders, and despite repeated public assurances to the contrary, there's no evidence that American Special Forces troops were able to find and destroy any mobile Scud launchers in the Gulf War.

During Sharon's visit, American and Israeli officials told me, the Prime Minister and Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, the Israeli Defense Minister, reached an understanding with Washington on advance notice of any impending invasion, and also urged that the Bush Administration do what was necessary—placing a large number of troops on the ground in western Iraq, for example—in order to destroy potential Scud-launching sites at the outset of an attack.

But the Israeli leaders refused to give the White House an assurance that it would not retaliate. A senior Israeli official told me, "We basically said that the United States should assume, in its considerations, that if Israel is to be hit, Israel will hit back. We took a hit in 1991 and did not hit back because we could have ruined the United States-Arab coalition. Our lack of retaliation was seen in the West as very smart, but in the Arab world it had a serious negative effect on Israel's deterrence posture. If someone thinks it can hit Israel and not be hit ten times as strongly back, it is a serious issue. It won't happen again. Our message is clear—if a Scud hits Tel Aviv with a dirty warhead and you have dozens of people killed, does anyone really expect Israel to sit there? Will they dare ask us not to respond?"

In the talks, the Bush Administration made it known that it anticipated that the Iraqi leadership would arm its mobile Scuds with biological and chemical warheads. "No one discounts the possibility of biological warfare," the Israeli official said, "but we believe it is more likely to be delivered by Iraqi aircraft, and not Scuds, and therefore is not as much of a threat. No Iraqi aircraft reached Israel in 1991, and Saddam does not have as much as he did then—and we're a lot better in anti-aircraft defenses." However, he added, "If Saddam believes that a regime change is the goal of an American invasion, and he is the target, it's all for broke."

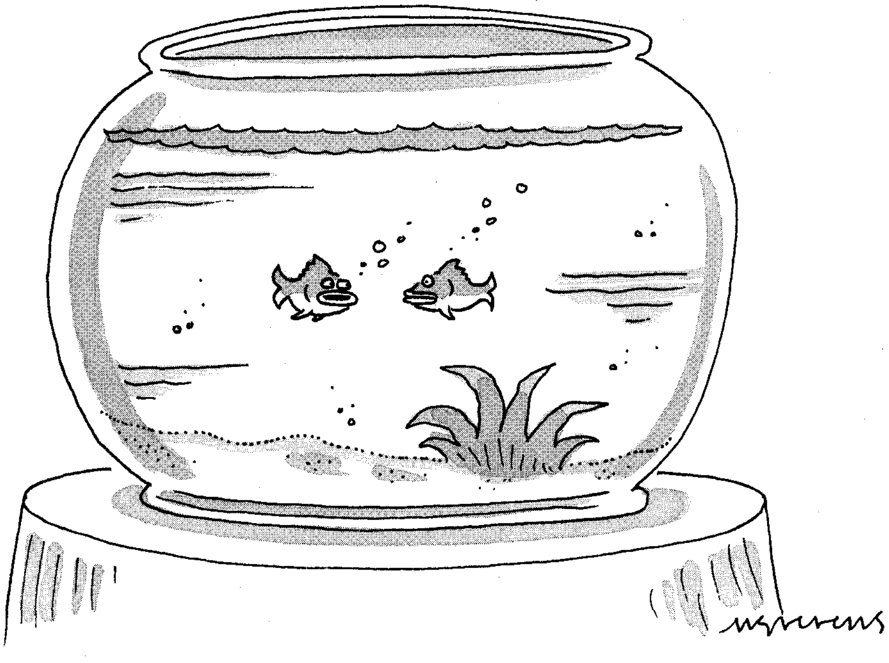
One of Richard Armitage's associates described the threat to Israel, and Israel's ability to counterattack, as factors that cannot be dismissed, given Israel's known nuclear capability: "If Saddam goes against Israel big time and they come on our side big time, we've got the whole Arab-speaking world against us, instead of just Muslim terrorists."

Richard Perle took issue with the Israeli concern about an Iraqi bombardment. Because of the strong likelihood of devastating retaliation by Israel, he argued, Saddam would consider attacking only if his options ran out. "The doomsday scenario is that in desperation Saddam sends weapons of mass destruction toward Israel," Perle told me. "If you assume it's a desperation move, you have to ask yourself to what extent will Saddam's maniacal orders be carried out"—presuming that Iraqi troops and citizens, encouraged by the American attacks and bombing, would rebel against the leadership. "If you get that order and you're managing a Scud unit, do you carry it out? If you do, you're hanged or you're dead. By the time Saddam does that"—order the attack on Israel—"he's done anyway.

"Nobody's going to say that it's without risk," Perle added, referring to a United States attack. "From Israel's point of view, are they going to get safer in time?"—as Iraq continues to develop its weapons of mass destruction. "If the Israeli leadership is already deterred by what Saddam threatens now, what happens when he gets nuclear weapons?" Echoing the view of Wolfowitz and many of his colleagues in the Pentagon, Perle said, "The moment Saddam is challenged effectively, he's history."

A senior I.N.C. official said that earlier versions of its invasion plan, as endorsed by Downing, did not call for a direct military assault on Baghdad, but proposed quick-strike attacks on military units in the north and primarily in the south. In this scenario, Saddam would not feel pressured to escalate immediately and order an all-out attack on Israel, the official said. "We want to leave him room in the center of the country, to give him reasons not to use biological weapons on Israel." (One Israeli who has reviewed the plan described it as leaving Saddam with the option of staying in "a sliver of land" or risk moving to the north or the south with his Army, thus exposing the forces to American airpower.) "Baghdad will erupt," the I.N.C. official predicted, "and so he will go to his bolt hole at Tikrit"—Saddam's home town, northwest of Baghdad, and the site of one of his military complexes. "The possibility of survival will be an incentive for him not to use chemical or biological weapons," the I.N.C. official said. "The fall of Baghdad is the *result*, not the plan."

In May, the President has a summit meeting in Russia, and later that month the United Nations will review economic sanctions against Iraq. The new "smart" sanctions sought by the Bush Administration would make it



"I've been thinking about getting a snail."

harder for Iraq to buy dual-use goods—materials with both civil and military functions—but permit more medicine and other needed materials to flow into Iraq, easing the strain on the population. The United Nations will also consider a renewal of the oil-for-food program, with the prospect that Iraq will find it easier to purchase humanitarian goods. At any time, of course, the sanctions could be dropped if Iraq first accepted a renewal of United Nations inspections of its suspected nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons sites. The American plan, officials agreed, is to make so many demands—complete access to palaces, for example—that it will be almost impossible for Saddam to agree. The Europeans, especially the French, are known to be trying to persuade Saddam to "open up," as a senior Administration consultant put it, to another U.N. inspection plan and "not give the United States an excuse to bomb."

By June, a Presidential decision on how to proceed against Saddam should have been made. But there are some Administration supporters who see little evidence of long-range thinking. "The central American premise is that you deal with Iraq and everything else will fall in place," said Geoffrey Kemp, the N.S.C.'s ranking expert on the Near East in the first Reagan Administration, who, as director of Regional Strategic Programs at the Nixon Center, has been examining options for the Middle East after Saddam. "Syria comes to terms. The Saudis will conform. Iran will be surrounded by American forces, and the mullahs will have to make concessions to the moderates. There will be a settlement between Israel and Palestine. The end of Saddam will lead to an economic renaissance in Iraq. I'd say fantastic—if it happens.

"Whatever happens," Kemp went on, "Bush cannot afford to fail. At the end of the day, we must have a stable, pro-Western government in Baghdad. But it's important also that you look at the worst case. One nightmare would be that Saddam used weapons of mass destruction against Israel and you'd end up with a U.S.-Israeli war against Iraq. No one knows how much it will cost. You could have an interruption in oil supplies. Meanwhile, you've still got Afghanistan. The whole purpose of going in is to cleanse Iraq of all weapons of mass-destruction capability. If Saddam is gone and his sons dispatched, you will still need two things: complete coöperation of whoever is running the show and inspection teams to cleanse every bedroom and every crevice in the palaces. Iraq is a proud country that has been humiliated, and it's madness to think that these people, while hating Saddam, are in love with the United States. Latent nationalism will emerge, and there will be those who want to hold on to whatever weapons they've held back. The danger is that these capabilities could pop up somewhere else—in control of some small Army group with its own agenda."

This week, Vice-President Cheney leaves for an extended trip to the Middle East—where a significant and largely unpublicized buildup of American military forces is already under way. Officially, the Pentagon says that about five thousand American troops are stationed in Kuwait, but a senior Administration consultant told me that by mid-February there were, in fact, many times that number on duty there, along with an extensive offshore Navy presence. The military buildup, intelligence officials explained, is designed to protect Kuwait and other allied nations in the Gulf in case Saddam chooses to strike first.

The President's "axis of evil" language in the State of the Union Message and the steadily expanding American arsenal have prompted many anxious diplomatic inquiries in recent weeks from the Middle East and Europe. One of Cheney's goals will be to explain the U.S. position to allies and attempt to build a coalition for another invasion of Iraq—a daunting task, in the view of many inside and outside the government. The only likely ally at this point is Tony Blair's Britain.

With regard to the attack on Iraq, not everyone on the inside is sure that the President can get what he wants: a successful overthrow with few American casualties and a new, pro-Western regime. "We've got a great way to get it started," a former intelligence official said. "But how do we finish it?" As for Bush's eagerness to get rid of Saddam, he said, "It's a snowball rolling downhill, gaining momentum on its own. It's getting bigger and bigger, but nobody knows what they're going to do." ♦

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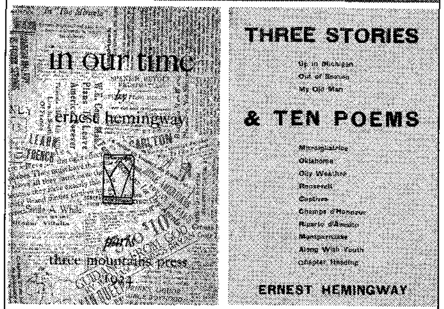

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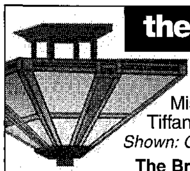

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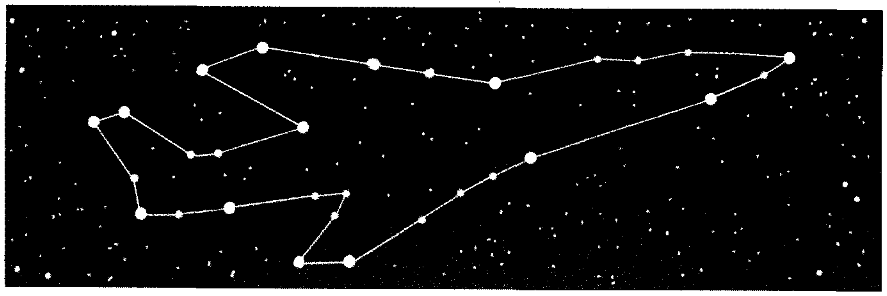

MARK ZINGARELLI

Aries: This is no time for a romantic affair. Better scrap those plans for the weekend—and for zodiac's sake don't go near a suspension bridge. Or maybe it's O.K.; the omens are ambiguous at best. Just don't get mad at people trying to be helpful.

Taurus: That trusting nature of yours could land you in big trouble, because it's about to become explosively clear that certain "friends" of yours aren't such friends after all. In fact, maybe you should avoid their company for a while. On the other hand, it could all be a harmless prank. Your call!

Gemini: Public places will be unlucky for the next little while. Heave those meaningful relationships overboard and concentrate on saving your own skin. It can't be emphasized enough that the forces of darkness are gathering, so stay in the light. All a bit hysterical-sounding? Could be. The main thing is don't panic. Still, you could soon be cursing yourself for turning a deaf ear. It's so hard to know such things for sure.

Cancer: The boss has almost decided to give you a big fat raise, and that special someone is hearing church bells—so no wonder you're feeling pretty good about things these days. Don't be fooled. Grab your life savings and vamoose. And stick to secondary roads. But this is all on the vague side. Without solid evidence, your best move may be to simply go about your life normally. Even if that life suddenly goes up in flames because you just wouldn't listen.

Leo: If you wake up this morning with a bad case of the jitters, don't say we didn't warn you. The most important thing you'll do today will be to throw all packages you receive in the river, then run like the wind. Don't ask why, just do it, now! False alarm? Happens all the time.

Virgo: An exotic vacation spot beckons, and, with your natural exuberance, you're up for a little adventure. But now's exactly the wrong time; you'll be better off curbing your wanderlust and sticking close to home, under the bed—or, better yet, fleeing to a U.S. Army base. Is following this absurd scenario worth the risk of being taken for a nutcase? The laws of probability say no, and so does common sense. But remember, that's what the passengers on the Titanic thought, too.

Libra: Hospitals are going to feature prominently for you in the next few days. Better stock up on your blood type and check your medical-insurance coverage. Do it soon, because all cell-phone service may soon be knocked out. Since you've always been a levelheaded sort who bridles at irresponsible fearmongering, though, make sure to demand proof before going off half-cocked. But then even a nutty rumor can have a grain of truth. We'll leave the final judgment up to you.

Scorpio: Big changes are in the air, but not the kind you expect. Forget that golf date; now's the perfect time to wrap up your worldly affairs. The old familiar feeling that people are out to get you isn't just paranoia this time. But keeping your guard up will be of no help, because you won't know who your bête noire is until it's too late. There is an outside chance that somebody's blowing smoke—but are you really confident enough not to heed this warning? The odds are even. Nobody envies you the decision you have to make.

Sagittarius: You were bound for a downturn after your recent run of amazing success, and this one's a doozy. For once, your famous sang-froid may not be enough to save you. Frankly, nothing short of a miracle could. That's one way of looking at it. Another is to laugh off such cockamamie predictions. Another is to start praying. Who can foretell the future, anyway?

Capricorn: For the next week or so, suspicion will be a virtue and keeping your head down a matter of sheer survival. Thanks but no thanks, you say; I never listen to doubletalk. Good point! What would happen if you paid attention to every groundless claim and counterclaim in today's crazy world? Well, you might live to a ripe old age! It's strictly up to you to decide what's wheat and what's chaff. But don't blame anybody except yourself if your world ends with a bang, not a whimper.

Aquarius: Don't go near the water. Or dive right in. That's the murky choice you're faced with today. Best to stay away from dams, in any case. What dams? Why? You ask too many questions—or is it not enough questions? Sorry, there's no crystal ball. And, official warnings or not, nothing's certain in this life but death and taxes.

Pisces: Your self-satisfied life is about to take a sharp turn. Wear fireproof clothing, stock up on canned goods, wrap all pets in asbestos. That's all we can tell you just now. And if that's not enough then go about your business and don't give it another thought. But, before doing so, think: is everybody really out of step but you? Wow, we don't envy you this conundrum one little bit! ♦

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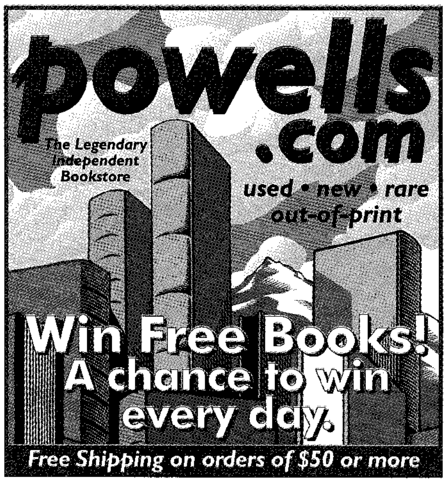

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MEDICAL DISPATCH

COLD COMFORT

After decades of research, the common cold has revealed only some of its mysteries.

BY ATUL GAWANDE

There is, when you look into it, not a lot that makes sense about the common cold. For one thing, there is the name. As cold experts have pointed out, in almost all Indo-European languages one of the words or phrases for the malady plays on the word for low temperature. In Italian, the common cold is *raffreddore*, from *freddo*, meaning cold. In Hindi, the word *sardi* denotes both being made cold and a cold itself. The notion that a chill puts you at risk of catching a cold is ancient and nearly universal. Yet science has found no evidence for it. One of the first studies on the matter was led by Sir Christopher Andrewes, of the Common Cold Research Unit, in Salisbury, England, a half century ago. He and his team took a group of volunteers—half of whom had been kept warm and comfortable and half of whom had been made to take a bath, stand dripping wet without a towel in a drafty corridor for half an hour, and finally get dressed but wear wet socks for several hours—and inoculated them with cold virus up their noses. Despite a measurable drop in body temperature and considerable misery, the chilled group didn't get any more colds than the warm group. (It was work like this that earned Andrewes his knighthood.) Follow-up experiments have since demonstrated that being chilled has no effect on either the likelihood of catching a cold or the severity of a cold once you've caught it. Indeed, colds are common at every latitude and longitude in the world—in the Sahara, in Greenland, in Delhi, in Ulaanbaatar.

All the same, colds are curiously seasonal. No matter what the temperature or how subtle the change in weather, in most parts of the world the cold season begins with a peak in early fall, drones on through winter, and peaks again in mid-spring. In summer, whether it's July in Vladivostok or January in Canberra, colds almost disappear. All of this raises a basic question: How do you catch a cold, anyway?

As the Canadian cold historian J. Barnard Gilmore points out in his 1998 book "In Cold Pursuit," some of the most provocative reports on the subject have come from small, isolated communities—island villages, nuclear submarines, rural trading posts. Among these is a 1931 field study of Longyear City, an Arctic coal-mining settlement on the island of Spitsbergen, midway between the Norwegian mainland and the North Pole. For seven to nine months of the year, the town's five hundred residents were iced in, and during that time colds were almost nonexistent. Legend had it, however, that the arrival in port of the first ship of summer invariably brought with it a full-blown cold epidemic. J. Harlan Paul, a physician, and H. L. Freese, a microbiologist, decided to go to Longyear City to investigate.

The two scientists arrived in September, 1930, and spent eleven months on Spitsbergen. They found, as expected, that colds died out soon after the last boat of the year departed. The long winter that followed was quiet. Then, in May, the ice began to melt and break up. And on May 23rd, at 9 P.M., the first steamer of the 1931 season arrived in port with mail and fifty new workers for the mine. The researchers made sure they boarded the steamer while it was still out in the fjord and before anyone had disembarked. They examined each of the passengers carefully. None had any signs of a cold. A new worker was evidently in an early stage of infection; within a few hours of leaving the ship he developed symptoms of a cold.

Less than forty-eight hours later, three townspeople developed new colds. One was a storekeeper, another an outdoor worker, and the third a miner. Paul and Freese retraced everyone's steps. They found that only the first two victims had come into close contact with any of the new arrivals. More puzzlingly, they reported, "We were unable to trace any direct contact between the man with a 'cold' who had arrived on the first boat and these three men."

Nevertheless, from that point the illness spread swiftly. Within a week, eighty-four people had come down with colds. One week later, about a hundred more caught the bug. By the end of the first month, three-quarters of the winter residents had been afflicted. Yet the researchers also discovered that there was a small but apparently hardy group of people who, despite frequent exposure, never developed the cold. A virus had travelled through town, Paul and Freese concluded, but they could not explain how.

American adults suffer an average of between two and four colds a year, and children six to eight. Although even scientists sometimes talk of "the cold virus," there is no one virus that causes colds. Since the nineteen-fifties, five families of viruses have been known to cause colds, including the coronaviruses, the parainfluenza viruses, and the adenoviruses. The most common and familiar of these is the rhinovirus family, which accounts for around forty per cent of colds and itself breaks down into at least a hundred genetically distinct viruses. The cause of approximately a third of all colds remains unknown.

Scientists were surprised at how difficult it is to catch a cold from a kiss.

MICHAEL ROBERTS

Once any of these viruses get to the lining of your nose and start an infection, the miseries are pretty much the same. Symptoms usually begin from between eight and twenty-four hours after infection (though some viruses may incubate for as long as five days). On the first day of illness, you typically notice that your throat is sore or scratchy. On the second and third days, the membranes of your nose and sinuses thicken to the point of obstruction. A thin, clear secretion (made up primarily of mucoid proteins and water, but also of sloughed cells and large concentrations of virus) flows freely from the nasal lining. Inflammatory molecules in the fluid irritate the edges of your nostrils, turning them raw and red. As the cold persists, the secretions become dense and gluey. Then, after four or five days, the passages begin to open up again. For about a third of cold sufferers, a cough—caused by persistent inflammation in the upper airway—becomes the longest-lasting and most annoying problem. As a rule, cold symptoms usually go away in about a week, though for about a quarter of victims it may take two.

Antibodies from previous exposure can protect you from a particular cold-virus strain, but repeat infections are not at all uncommon. And, with so many different strains of virus circulating, you are usually an open target. Under ordinary conditions, introduction of a single rhinovirus case into the home will lead within a few days to infection in one-quarter to three-quarters of the other household members. It need not be just one virus, either. A study of Seattle families found as many as four viruses infecting a family at once.

Figuring out precisely how cold viruses pass between people has been particularly vexing. Researchers at the time of the First World War were able to demonstrate what now seems obvious: you can induce a cold by taking a concentrate from the nasal secretions of someone who has an active cold and placing it directly into either the nose or the eyes of a healthy person. (The virus placed in the eye runs down into the nose via the tear ducts.) Curiously, although the technique has been perfected over the decades, even direct inoculation with purified virus doesn't uniformly succeed. A few people—under ten per cent—do not get infected, despite having no antibody to the virus. Furthermore, according to nasal specimens and antibody tests, about one out of four people will develop an active viral infection yet have no symptoms of a cold—the so-called silent cold. Biopsy studies have now shown that cold viruses generally infect only a tiny portion of the nose and do very little damage by themselves. Rather, it's the inflammatory response—the attack on the virus by white blood cells and antibodies—that causes the miserable swelling and secretions. For whatever reason, there are people who, at least some of the time, manage to rid themselves of an infection without mounting this response. They can be floridly infected, shed large amounts of virus, and pass the bug on to other people, but continue to feel fine themselves.

In the nineteen-forties, high-speed flash photographs demonstrated that an ordinary sneeze expels particles like a 12-gauge spraying bird shot—sending out droplets by the thousand from the mouth and nose at velocities approaching a hundred miles an hour. A British study published in *The Lancet* showed that a culture plate placed three feet from a sneezing subject would collect more than nineteen thousand bacterial colonies. Droplets could float for minutes, and smaller particles a few microns in diameter could hover in the air for days. The conclusion that colds were transmitted by air was taken as more or less self-evident. Proving it was another matter.

THE PROMOTION

I was a dog in my former life, a very good
dog, and, thus, I was promoted to a human being.
I liked being a dog. I worked for a poor farmer,
guarding and herding his sheep. Wolves and coyotes
tried to get past me almost every night, and not
once did I lose a sheep. The farmer rewarded me
with good food, food from his table. He may have
been poor, but he ate well. And his children
played with me, when they weren't in school or
working in the field. I had all the love any dog
could hope for. When I got old, they got a new
dog, and I trained him in the tricks of the trade.
He quickly learned, and the farmer brought me into
the house to live with the family. I brought the farmer
his slippers in the morning, as he was getting
old, too. I was dying slowly, a little bit at a
time. The farmer knew this and would bring the
new dog in to visit me from time to time. The
new dog would entertain me with his flips and
flops and nuzzles. And then one morning I just
didn't get up. They gave me a fine burial down
by the stream under a shade tree. That was the
end of my being a dog. Sometimes I miss it so
I sit by the window and cry. I live in a high-rise
that looks out at a bunch of other high-rises.
At my job I work in a cubicle and barely speak
to anyone all day. This is my reward for being
a good dog. The human wolves don't even see me.
They fear me not.

—*James Tate*

In the summer of 1950, Sir Christopher Andrewes conducted a series of experiments re-creating the isolation of Spitsbergen. He assembled a dozen volunteers and deposited them in a group of houses provided by the Duke of Sutherland, on the otherwise uninhabited island of Eilean nan Ron, off the northern coast of Scotland. After the volunteers were sequestered for ten weeks, six strangers who had recently been infected with purified rhinovirus were inserted into the group. The entrance of these "invaders" was carefully scripted. First, they spent three hours in an empty room in one of the houses, making sure they were "liberal in the way they disseminated nasal discharge," as Sir Christopher later wrote. Half an hour after they left, four of the island dwellers, designated Party A in his report, were brought in to occupy the contaminated room. The invaders then entered a second room. Here Party B was present but was separated from them by a blanket that had been stretched across the room, with space above and below to allow air to pass freely. The two groups shared the room for several hours. Testing demonstrated that fine droplets from the infected group had indeed travelled throughout the room. Finally, the invaders went to a separate house, where they lived and ate with another group, Party C, for three days, providing maximum exposure. The subjects were then closely monitored for colds over the next few days. To everyone's surprise, no one in any of the parties developed a cold. Later studies attempting to demonstrate the transmission of virus through the air were hardly more successful.

In 1984, researchers at the University of Wisconsin at Madison reported the results of their own odd series of experiments. In the first set, volunteers were infected with rhinovirus, and when they were at the peak of their colds and shedding large quantities of virus they were seated at a table in a tiny, unventilated room, three feet from healthy subjects. The researchers had everyone talk, sneeze, and, weirdly, sing during the next few hours. The result? Nine subjects were exposed; none came down with colds.

The researchers went on to conduct what became their best-known experiment. This time, they had their infected volunteers kiss the healthy test subjects, assuming that this would transmit the virus easily. Each subject was kissed on the mouth for a minimum of one minute. (Beyond this, the precise mechanics were not specified. "The donors and recipients were instructed to use the kissing technique most natural for them," the researchers reported.) The cold sufferers kissed sixteen subjects in all. The result was just one confirmed case of rhinovirus infection.

When they were sent home to their families, however, the experimentally inoculated people spread their colds easily and widely. The conclusion scientists drew was that a sneeze or a cough or a kiss might theoretically be capable of transmitting a cold, but it did so only rarely, and a brief exposure seemed unlikely to succeed. Some other mechanism was presumed to be more important, and this was how attention shifted to nose-wiping.

In a rather suggestive experiment, Sir Christopher's research team set up on a person's nose an apparatus with a thin tube that trickled out a clear fluid at the same rate a cold would. This fluid, however, contained an invisible fluorescent dye. With the device in place, the volunteer spent a few hours socializing with a group of people in a room—eating, chatting, playing cards. At the end, the experimenters turned out the lights and used an ultraviolet lamp to illuminate the dye. To their horror, the dye had gone everywhere—all over the person's face and hands, onto his food, onto the playing cards, onto other people's hands, and even around *their* noses. As an American observational study of an audience at a medical conference later found, in ordinary circumstances one in three adults picks his nose every hour. People rub their eyes even more frequently.

The hands had to be the culprit, and a team of scientists at the University of Virginia—Jack Gwaltney, Owen Hendley, and Richard Wenzel—provided the first persuasive evidence of this. In 1973, the team reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* a set of studies which established a convincing chain of causation. The researchers examined ten subjects who had active colds and readily found that four had virus on their hands. When drops of extracts from their mucus were permitted to dry on nylon, wool, silk, Formica, stainless steel, wood, and other surfaces, live virus could still be recovered three hours later. This was true of virus placed on skin, too. (The virus survived well on most nonporous surfaces but hardly at all on facial tissue or cotton handkerchiefs.) If volunteers touched the contaminated surfaces—including other people's hands—the virus was picked up at least sixty per cent of the time. In another test, volunteers were asked to

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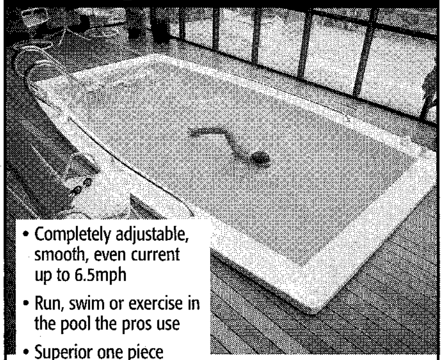

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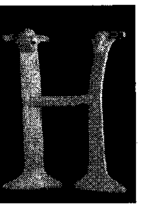

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touch a contaminated plastic surface with a finger and immediately either rub their eyes or put their fingers up their noses. Four out of the eleven became infected. In a follow-up study, healthy volunteers were told to rub their eyes and probe their noses after holding coffee cups that had been handled by cold sufferers who had just wiped their own noses. Fifty per cent developed colds.

And so, it was concluded, contact with your hands is how a cold virus gets passed around. It need not involve direct contact with people who have a cold. Hence the familiar advice that the best way to avoid a cold is to wash your hands frequently and not touch people with colds, especially children. That's hard to put into practice, though. When Jack Gwaltney—who has now done close to forty years of research on the common cold and is recognized as the world's foremost expert on it—is asked what he does to reduce his exposure in the cold season, he says it's pretty much hopeless. "I tried to be careful about washing my hands when my grandchildren were little, especially when they had those two ropes of mucus coming down," he recalls. "But you were still going to pick them up and hug them, and they were still going to go around touching everything. There's no avoiding it."

When he feels himself coming down with a cold, Gwaltney takes ibuprofen and an antihistamine for the next week. These won't stop a cold, but they are among the few interventions reliably proven to alleviate symptoms. The ibuprofen reduces coughing and the antihistamine reduces obstruction and runniness—although you have to take an older antihistamine, like chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton) or clemastine (Tavist), the kind that you buy over the counter and that makes you drowsy. The new ones, like Allegra and Claritin, are too narrow in their effects to work for colds. Petrolatum-based ointments are thought to protect the nostrils against the inflammatory drizzle if they're used when symptoms begin, but there are no reliable studies to prove it. What about zinc? The only consistent effect that well-designed trials have reported is that it tastes bad. Antibiotics? No benefit. Vitamin C? It won't prevent colds, according to dozens of studies, but at high doses it may reduce symptoms modestly (though not as much as an antihistamine). Echinacea? Inadequately tested. How about drinking lots of fluids, as doctors always tell you to do? There's no basis for it. As one cold researcher put it, "I'm not sure it even makes sense."

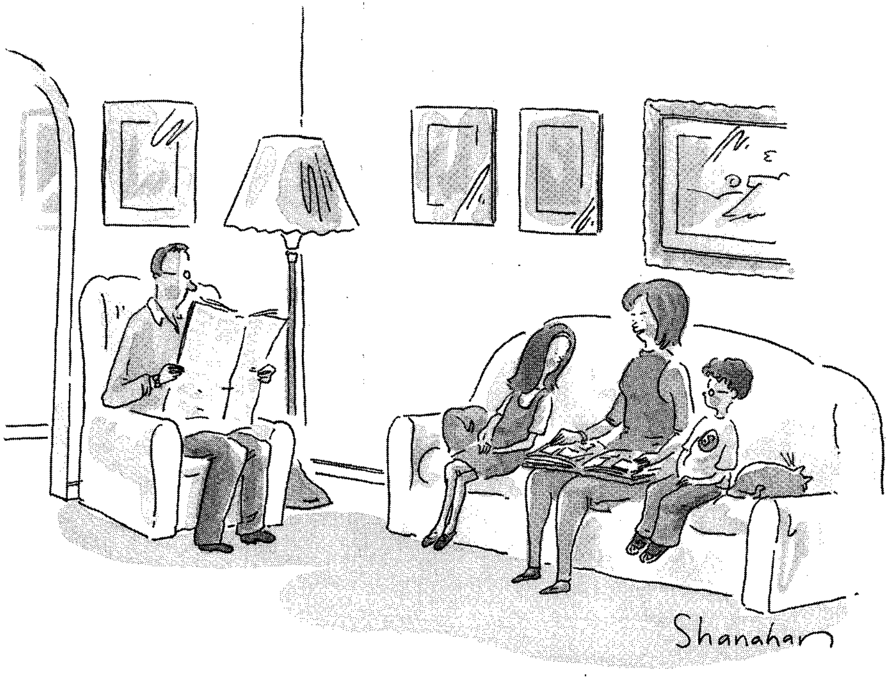
Some drugs in the research pipeline have been gathering attention of late. A new group, known as capsid-binding agents, are designed to attach to rhinoviruses and, among other things, stop them from fastening to the cells of your nasal membranes. One of these compounds recently made headlines when two randomized trials with more than two thousand patients showed that it could reduce both the severity and the duration of a rhinovirus cold. Another new group of drugs to emerge, the 3C protease inhibitors, are designed to block replication of rhinoviruses once they've penetrated your nasal cells. There have been promising preliminary results in clinical trials of one such agent, which has now been given the unpronounceable name ruprintrivir. (Manufacturers like to give drugs unpronounceable generic names because then the only thing you'll remember is whatever brand name they eventually choose.) So far, the measurable effect of each of these drugs has been modest—perhaps reducing the duration of a weeklong cold by a day or two. Even if they come to market, they will work only for a subset of cold viruses and will have to be obtained through a doctor and started no later than the first day of a cold. They're also bound to be expensive. It seems likely that a cure for the common cold will remain elusive.

We may have better luck stopping colds from spreading in the first place. At a recent scientific conference, Ronald Turner, formerly of the Medical University of South Carolina, announced the results of testing antiseptic skin cleansers that contained pyroglutamic acid or salicylic acid. Unlike most soaps, these cleansers not only killed cold viruses on people's hands immediately but continued to do so for hours afterward. Despite having their hands intentionally contaminated with rhinovirus and being made to probe their nostrils and rub their eyes, volunteers who had earlier washed with solutions containing one of the compounds developed fewer colds than those who used a control solution. As it turns out, pyroglutamic acid is a common ingredient in ordinary skin moisturizers, and salicylic acid is used in over-the-counter acne treatments. An effective antiviral lotion may already be on the shelves.

Will these cleansers stop viruses in the real world, though? One would think so, given all the studies about hand-spread colds. Yet there always seems to be at least one study that doesn't quite square with whatever tidy theories the scientists concoct. When it comes to colds, that study is the Wisconsin poker experiment, conducted almost twenty years ago. The cold researchers at the University of Wisconsin surmised that if the main route by which colds were spread was from hand to hand (or object to hand) and then from hand to nose or eyes, preventing people from touching their noses and eyes should stop virtually all colds. So they devised a simple but clever experiment. They took healthy volunteers and volunteers who had laboratory-induced colds and put them in a room to play a marathon session of poker from eight in the morning until eleven at night. Half of the healthy subjects were allowed to play cards normally, and the other half were restrained by devices that were designed to prevent them from touching any part of their own heads or faces as they played. Some of them wore a three-foot-wide clear plastic collar; others wore an orthopedic brace that kept their arms from bending more than forty degrees. The devices were removed only for meals and trips to the bathroom. At those times, the subjects' hands were disinfected and gloved the way a surgeon's hands would be for an operation. (Assistants were provided in the event that nose-scratching was needed.) Subjects were closely monitored for the subsequent development of colds.

The results still confound cold experts. More than half of the restrained volunteers developed colds afterward—just as many as among the unrestrained volunteers. Tests confirmed that in all cases they had caught the same virus that the sick volunteers were carrying. The scientists could not say how.

There is something almost beautifully crafty about the common cold. It knows us better than we know ourselves—living and travelling and multiplying by means of an unnoticed touch, a quick, involuntary wipe of an eye, or perhaps some tic we have not yet recognized. As every textbook that addresses the subject is forced at some point to say, "Other factors may be involved." Nonetheless, there are a few things that can be said with certainty: May will come, colds will subside, and no one will know why. ♦



"And this is your father's first girlfriend, just before she was stoned to death."

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PROFILES

THE TORCH SINGER

Patti Smith has been a rock star for more than twenty-five years, in spite of some eccentric career choices.

BY SHARON DELANO

Patti Smith grew up in a semi-rural, working-class neighborhood in southern New Jersey, across the Delaware River from Philadelphia. Her mother was a waitress and her father worked the swing shift at a Honeywell plant, assembling thermostats. Philadelphia was a thirty-minute bus ride from her home. When she was a child, in the fifties, Smith took trips to bookstores there with her mother, and later, when she was a teen-ager, she would go by herself. One afternoon last spring, when Smith and her band were booked into a rock club in Philadelphia, I went with her on a walk from the band's hotel, near Rittenhouse Square, to Independence Hall. We passed the jazz club on Broad Street where she had heard John Coltrane play for fifteen minutes, before being thrown out because she was underage. "You could go to Market Street and see four or five movies for fifty cents," she recalled. "One time they had 'La Dolce Vita.' I didn't know about foreign films. And 'Wild Strawberries.' That changed my life." She found a copy of Arthur Rimbaud's "Illuminations" in a bargain book bin in the bus terminal, along with old copies of the *Evergreen Review*, a journal that in the early and mid-sixties was publishing Jean Genet and William Burroughs, and that had advertisements for bookstores and art galleries in New York.

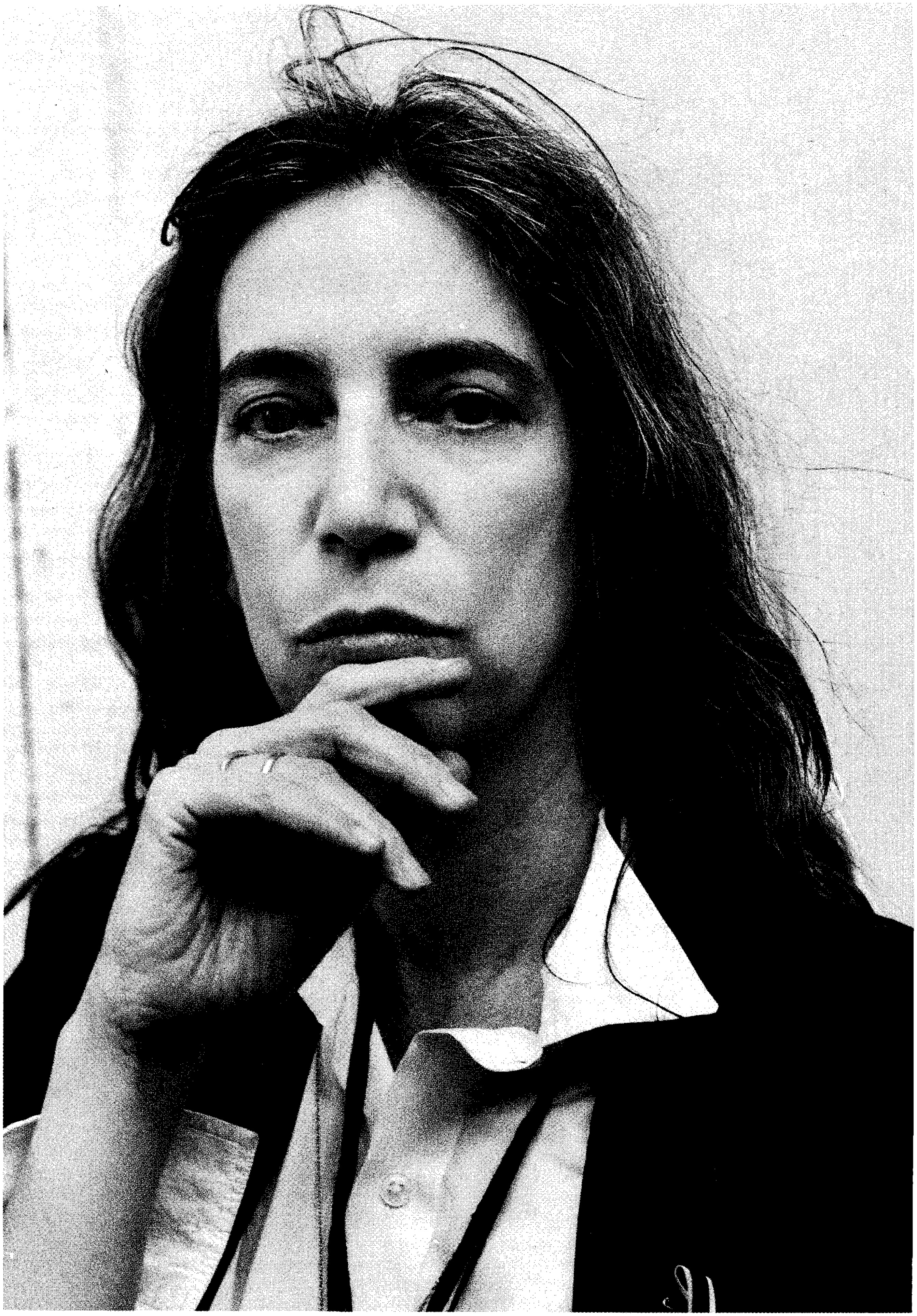
Oliver Ray, Smith's companion and a guitarist in her band, and Steven Sebring, a photographer who is working on a documentary of her life, had come along on the walk. When we got to Independence Hall, the four of us slipped in behind the last crowd of tourists for the day. Steven Sebring is a big guy, six feet three, with long blond hair and, at the time, a beard. He was wearing denim overalls and a cotton fishing hat with the sides pinned up. Oliver Ray, who also had a beard and a straggly mustache, wore faded jeans and a grubby T-shirt and a brown felt Worth & Worth fedora that his father gave him. It had long ago lost its shape and its band, and moths had eaten a pattern on the edge of the brim. Smith wore blue-tinted sunglasses, Helmut Lang jeans that grazed the tops of scuffed black motorcycle boots, and a black wool jacket made for her by the Belgian designer Ann Demeulemeester. The right pocket was torn from having books and eyeglasses jammed into it.

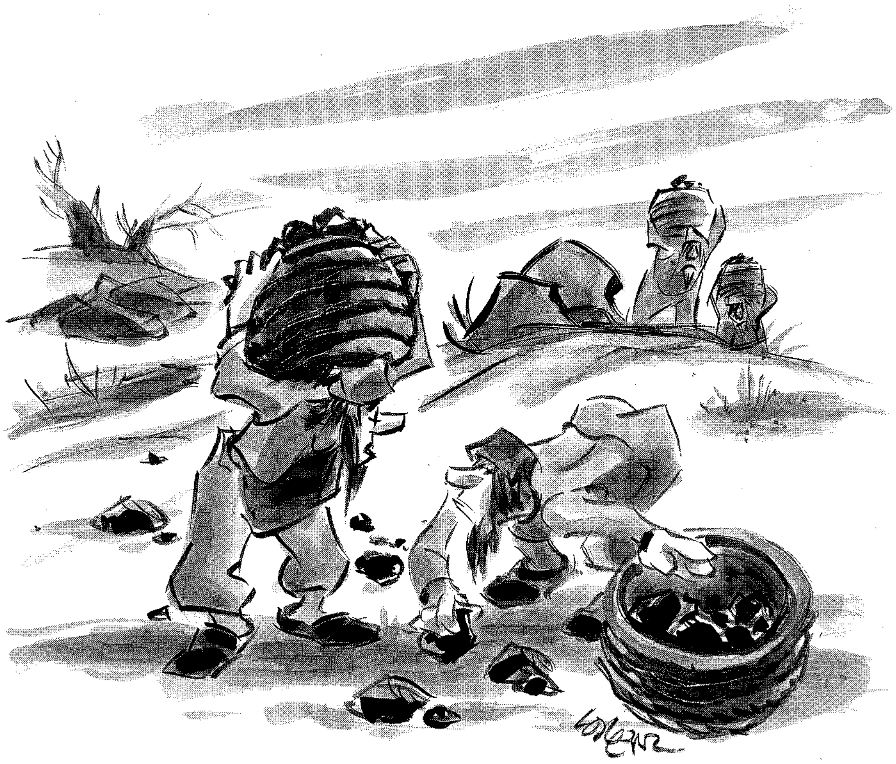
Smith is a Declaration of Independence buff. When she was a child, she had a fake-parchment reproduction of it and spent hours copying the words and the signatures. She got the idea for her last album, *Gung Ho*, which was released in 2000, when she saw a television documentary about Ho Chi Minh and discovered that he was also a student of the American Declaration of Independence. ("Patti gets these concepts and really works them over," Oliver Ray says.) A National Parks ranger was talking to a group of people in the Assembly Room, describing the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and Smith nodded appreciatively at the points he was making. The ranger, whose name was George, was a fan. He let us stay after closing time and showed us Jefferson's walking stick. Smith stood in the stairwell where the Liberty Bell used to hang. She said she imagined Thomas Jefferson and the other framers standing there, talking about how they were going to carry off the plan for the new union. Oliver Ray took down George's name for the V.I.P. list at their show that night at the Theatre of the Living Arts on South Street.

Smith's mother, Beverly, and her sister Linda had driven over from New Jersey for the occasion. Beverly is eighty-one and walks with some difficulty, but she comes to see Patti's shows as often as she can. They sat with friends in a taped-off section of the balcony, next to the band's video equipment. Patti sang "Kimberly," a pop-rock song from her first album, *Horses*, about when she "was young and so crazy" and having apocalyptic visions of burning barns and shifting planets. Kimberly is the youngest of Beverly's three daughters, a musician who played the mandolin on two of Patti's albums. Midway through the set, after she had played a clarinet solo, Patti waved at her mother. Beverly stood up and waved back. "That's why I'm on such good behavior tonight," Patti said to the crowd. Then the drummer, Jay Dee Daugherty, played the opening of "Don't Say Nothing," a song they wrote together. Smith was dancing, her arms stretched out to the audience, her fingers moving. Her voice is a muscular contralto that she uses the way a jazz singer does, creating hypnotic musical lines. Somewhere in the middle of the song, she spat on the floor next to her microphone stand and began to improvise on the theme of the destruction of the environment—"our water, our air." The song is about the importance of taking a stand, and when it ended she went on a tirade about pollution and the perils of cell phones and disposable diapers. "The reason they are doing this stuff to the environment," she cried, "is that they want you to buy all this crap they are making. You don't need it." An hour or so later, when the crowd was going nuts, swaying and jabbing their arms in the air and singing along with the band, Smith ended the night with Beverly's favorite song, "Rock n Roll Nigger," which is

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM KLEIN

"I wanted to be Johnny Carson's successor—that's what I dreamed of," Smith says. "Not of being the next Jim Morrison."





"No, no—we used to be an undeveloped country, but now we're a developing country."

based on the Rimbaudian notion of the artist as outsider—*un nègre*. "Jimi Hendrix was a nigger," she screamed. "Jackson Pollock was a nigger. Jesus Christ was a nigger. Jesus was a true revolutionary. He was crucified in a nest of thieves. He was a man of the people. He prayed until the blood poured from his pores like sweat." And she ripped the strings from her electric guitar.

Patti Smith is fifty-five, but she doesn't look much different than she did in 1975, when her friend Robert Mapplethorpe photographed her for the cover of *Horses*. The Mapplethorpe photograph, which was shot in black-and-white—unusual for the time—is one of the most recognizable images in the iconography of rock and roll. Smith is standing against a white wall. Her dark hair, which grazes the base of her neck, is thick and wild, and she stares insolently at the camera. She wears a white shirt and has tossed a black jacket over her left shoulder in an homage to Frank Sinatra's *boulevardier* poses. She looks arrogant, androgynous, and fragile. Smith's hair is longer today, and lighter, because of the gray strands in it, but she is as thin as she was then, and her face is smooth and unlined.

It is likely that *Horses* has sold around three hundred and fifty thousand copies, although music-industry reports weren't particularly thorough in the nineteen-seventies and eighties, and it is difficult to know for sure. It now sells two hundred copies a week, which is a respectable backlist figure, but the modest numbers don't reflect the album's influence. *Horses* is on most lists of the greatest rock albums of all time. Its critical success is one of the reasons that the phrase most frequently used to describe Smith, especially by headline writers, is "the godmother of punk." She was the first performer from the mid-seventies downtown New York music scene to get a major recording contract. In the spring of 1974, she recorded a version of "Hey Joe" for a small private label. "Hey Joe" had been the first single put out by the Jimi Hendrix Experience, in 1966. Smith's version was prefaced with comments addressed to Patty Hearst, who had recently robbed a bank with the Symbionese Liberation Army: "I was wondering, were you getting it every night from a black revolutionary man and his women or were you really dead?" An autobiographical prose poem, "Piss Factory," was on the B side. Several months later, the incipient Patti Smith Group—Smith, two guitarists, and a piano player—appeared at CBGBs, the small club on the Bowery that was spawning the early American punk bands, including Television, Blondie, and the Ramones. Soon after that, they recorded *Horses*. But it is misleading to imply that Patti Smith is the godmother of the Sex Pistols or the other nihilistic British bands that defined the punk movement in the nineteen-seventies. Smith's band was grounded in a rock tradition that the British punks attempted to deny, and she was self-consciously literary.

"Piss Factory" is the earliest selection on *Land: 1975-2002*, a retrospective compilation of Smith's work that is being released this month by Arista, her first and only record company. There are two CDs in the package: a selection of favorites from her eight albums, chosen largely by fans, and what Smith calls "flotsam and jetsam from different times—live performances and studio tracks and demos." The apotheosis of a bootleg. "Land" is the title of the central song suite on *Horses*. It opens with a poem-chant about a boy named Johnny who is in a hallway drinking tea and who is apparently raped by another boy, although the narrative is not completely clear. "I had nine different ideas when we did 'Land,'" Smith says. "There were nine vocal tracks, and it was a nightmare to mix." Johnny has a vision of horses, "white shining silver studs with their nose in flames," and then the song shifts into the "Land of a Thousand Dances" section and Johnny either kills himself or takes drugs, to the chorus "Go Rimbaud, go Rimbaud." In the long final segment of the song, Smith's voice is overdubbed, and all the themes merge into a reverie about "the sea of possibilities" and a man lying in sheets. "There are three components," Smith says. "The Rimbaudian component, which has to do with language and youth. And the Wild Boy component"—she had recently read William Burroughs's homoerotic/sci-fi novel "The Wild Boys"—"and the Jimi Hendrix component." *Horses* was recorded at Electric Lady Studios on

Eighth Street, which Hendrix had set up before he died, in 1970. "All of 'Land' is a dream of Jimi Hendrix as he's dying," Smith says. "Jimi Hendrix is dreaming a simple rock-and-roll song, and it takes him into all these other realms. 'Land' speaks of the possibilities of rock and roll. Where it can take you."

Smith lived in New York in the seventies, and then in a suburb of Detroit after she married the musician Fred (Sonic) Smith, in 1980. Her husband died in November, 1994. Two years later, she moved back to New York. She and Oliver Ray live in a small mid-nineteenth-century Greek Revival town house at the edge of Greenwich Village. The plum-colored paint on the front door is chipped and cracked, and the interior of the house has a pleasantly beat-up feeling. Guitars and guitar cases are usually propped along the bannister of the stairs to the second floor and on the furniture. Oliver Ray's two-hundred-watt Marshall amplifier, vintage 1968, stands against one wall, with a Cecil Beaton photograph of Jean Cocteau on top of it. The amp is next to a piano that Jesse, Smith's fourteen-year-old daughter, practices on. Two black bikes lean against a large rack filled with votive candles. A gray cat named Lua, a gift to Jesse from Ray, has the run of the place.

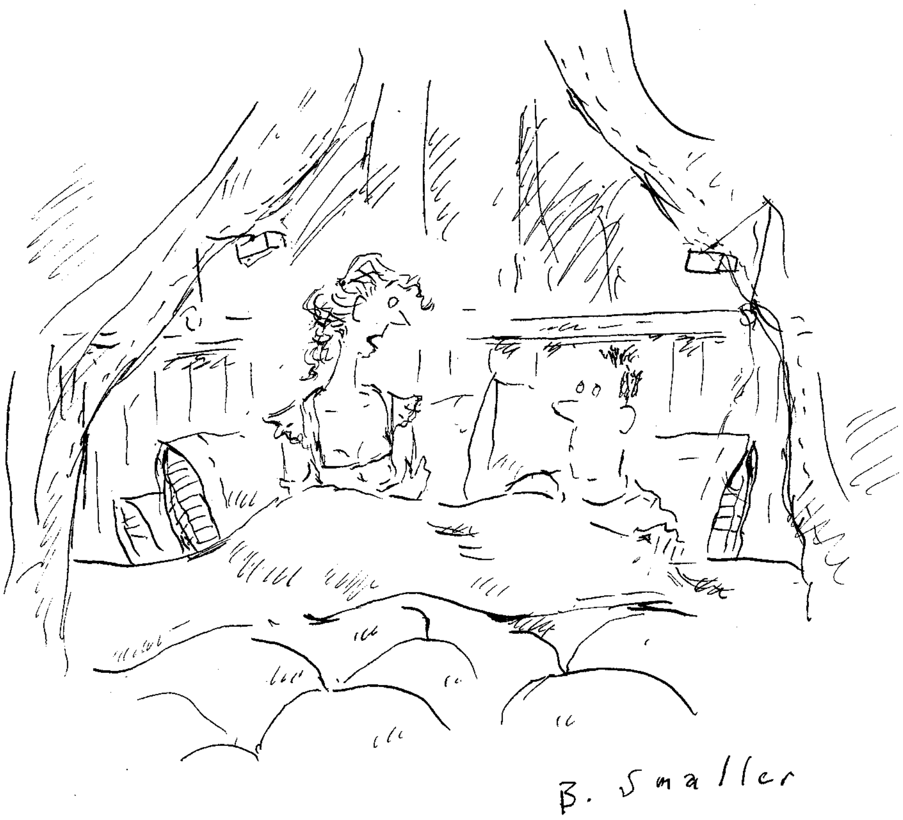
On the second floor, books—among them Hermann Hesse's "The Glass Bead Game," "Nabokov's Butterflies," a signed copy of Jean Genet's "Notre Dame des Fleurs," a catalogue for a Brancusi show at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and "The Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine"—are stacked next to a television set and shelves full of videotapes and DVDs. Smith's assistant, Andi Ostrowe, works at a laptop on a table along one wall. Ostrowe began working with Smith in 1976, during the recording sessions for her second album, *Radio Ethiopia*. Ostrowe had just come back from a stint in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia, and she sent Smith a fan letter. Smith doesn't have a manager. "I'm pretty much unmanageable at this point," she says.

Smith and Ray's house is on a small street that used to have one of those startlingly direct SoHo views of the World Trade Center that made the towers seem much closer than they were. Early on the clear, sunny morning of September 11th, Smith sent Jesse off to school and sat on her stoop looking at the towers for a while before she went back to bed. Since then, one corner of the second-floor workroom has been taken up by an easel and sheets of drawing paper on which the outline of the shard of the north tower, with the eerie V shape at the top, is silk-screened. Smith worked for weeks on a series of drawings of the tower.

Smith was an artist before she was a poet or a rock star. Her first poems evolved from words that were embedded in drawings. The early drawings contain erotic and religious elements, rendered with a fine line and delicate coloring; the later work is often primarily a mass of words that form abstract shapes. Her drawings are in the collections of several museums, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In the World Trade Center drawings, which will be part of a retrospective exhibition of her work at the Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh next year, dense calligraphic lines of poems and phrases wind along the silk-screened ribs of the wrecked tower. The largest drawing (forty-eight inches by thirty inches) is made up of words from the Gospel of Peace of the Essenes, an austere Jewish sect that lived near the Dead Sea during the early Christian era. A smaller drawing has a line from the Koran.

"Building the whole Babel-like remains from handwriting," Smith says, is an idea that came partly from her study of the work of William Blake. One of her first books as a child was Blake's "Songs of Innocence and of Experience." The Tate Gallery in London asked her to perform during their big Blake exhibition in December, 2000, and she prepared an evening of readings, songs, and reminiscences that took place at St. James's Church, where Blake was baptized. Last summer, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened a smaller Blake exhibition in New York, she and Oliver Ray presented a version of the London show. "Blake gave me an aesthetic context," she said then, "a sense of exaltation." She sang "Over the Rainbow" and chanted "The Tyger" and gave a short commentary on hoof-and-mouth disease—which had recently precipitated a draconian slaughter of livestock in Britain—and somehow it all worked.

The Blake evenings can be viewed as analogous to chamber music performed by a few members of a large orchestra. The orchestra consists of Smith; Lenny

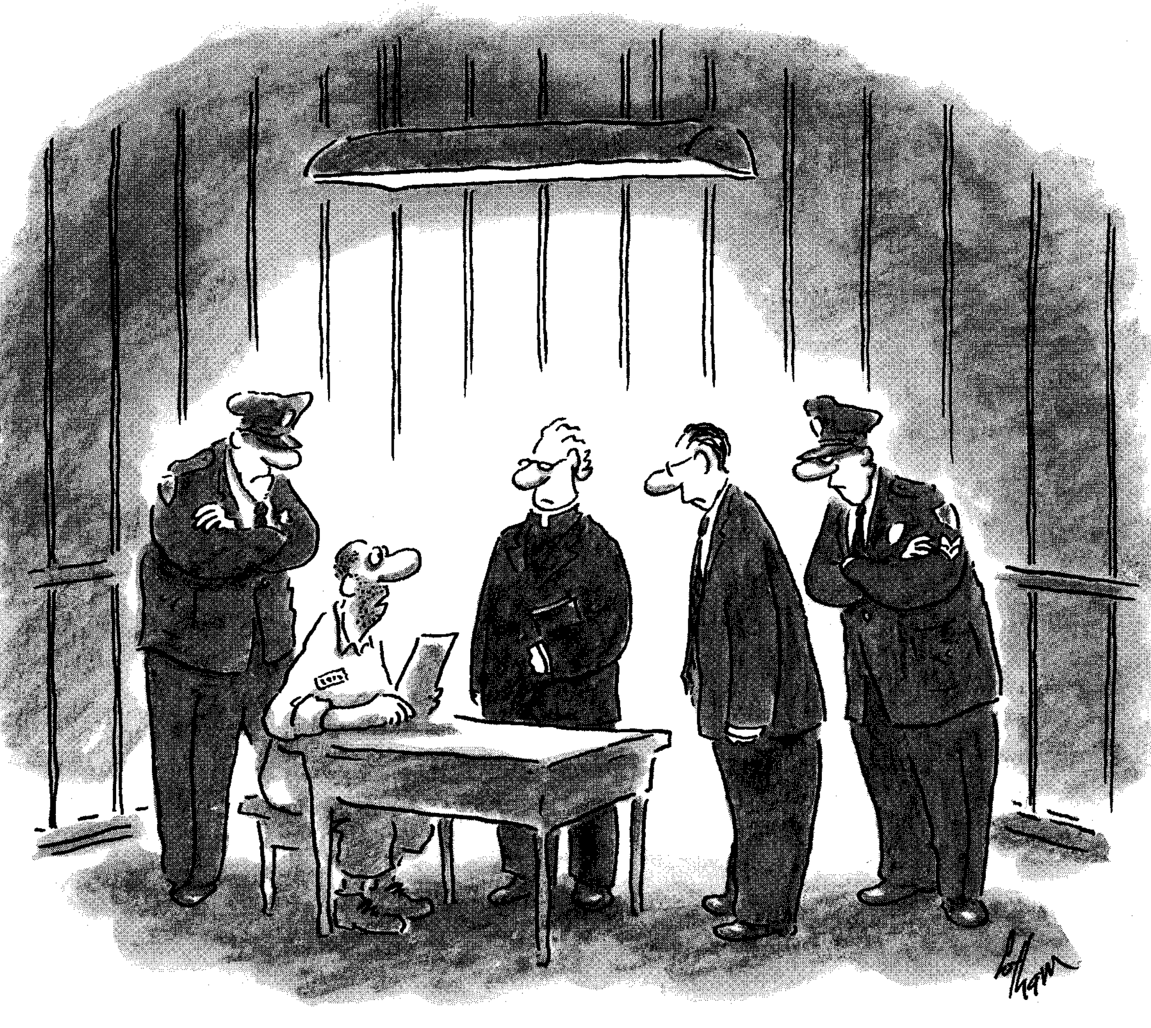


"Couldn't you at least try and read my mind?"

Kaye, the guitarist who began playing with her in 1971; Jay Dee Daugherty, the only regular drummer she has ever had; Tony Shanahan, the bass guitarist, who has been with them since 1995; and Oliver Ray, who joined the band in 1996. The band plays about seventy-five concerts a year, and Smith and Ray give maybe twenty-five song-and-poetry performances. Their schedule depends to a large degree on Jesse's school schedule, with summer being the busiest time for them. Last spring, they warmed up for a European tour by going on the road in the southeastern United States. It was a fairly low-budget operation. They drove from town to town, Smith and Ray and Lenny Kaye in Ray's white Land Rover Discovery, Daugherty and Shanahan in a rented S.U.V. Dan Lilienfeld, the visuals guy, and Martin Le Maire, the sound guy, shared a rented sedan, and the two road managers drove a Penske truck loaded with equipment.

Most of the band's appearances were in small rock clubs, but in Atlanta they opened for Bob Dylan at the Music Midtown festival, on an outdoor stage, with an audience of five thousand people. At three o'clock the next afternoon, when Oliver Ray parked the Land Rover in front of the Music Zone, a club in Asheville, North Carolina, where the crew was setting up the band's equipment, a dozen fans were waiting in the entryway. Several dedicated fans follow Smith from show to show, making sure that they are first in line so that they can secure a position in front of the stage. Asheville is a fairly quiet town, and the Music Zone wasn't sold out; it seemed unnecessary to hang around for five hours waiting for a spot in a club so small that even people at the back would be reasonably close to the band, but apparently that wasn't the point. Dan Lilienfeld, who has been doing special visual effects for Smith for two years, used to be a committed Deadhead. He sold T-shirts in parking lots to pay for gas and food during Grateful Dead tours. Lilienfeld knows about fandom. Nevertheless, he says that he was "dumbfounded at the fans who follow Patti," at the level of their obsession. When Smith walked into the Music Zone, the fans didn't try to touch her or even to speak to her. They were respectful, and responded politely when she said hello. But they looked at her with awe. It is hard to spend much time with Smith and not encounter that look. At dinner in Atlanta, in a small Italian restaurant, a middle-aged woman came up to her and said, "You changed my life." That or "You inspired me" is what they usually say. Danny Fields, who has been in the music business since the mid-sixties, and who was the manager of the Ramones, said to me, "If you could quantify the intensity of the fans' love for Patti, she would be more popular than Alanis Morissette."

In the meantime, however, Smith was playing in a former dry cleaner's in Asheville, a town of seventy thousand in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Music Zone



"I'd like to order off the children's menu."

is half a block from the entrance to Interstate 240, down the street from the Mellow Mushroom café and stores selling tie-dyed T-shirts, used books, and antiques. I sat at the bar before the show, chatting with a couple who had grown up in Asheville and who were concerned about the changes that had taken place there. A movie star—Andie MacDowell—and other wealthy sophisticates had recently moved in. The female member of the couple, a ruddy, heavyset young woman, thought the new glamour was a bad thing. She was in favor of malls and industrial parks that would bring jobs. The crowd in the club, maybe four hundred people, was a mix of the young and the lumpen and the middle class. A trio of very fat girls had settled down in overstuffed chairs on an elevated area to the left of the small stage. There were several overtly lesbian pairs. A man and a woman in their late forties stood holding their beers with napkins wrapped primly around the bottles. He had a beeper on his belt and she had a cell phone on hers. They were necking. Shortly before the show was to start, a young man with a ponytail took an eyedropper out of his bag and squirted something in his mouth.

Andrew Burns, one of the road managers, had placed candles and vases of flowers around the stage. A leather-bound edition of Blake's "Songs of Innocence" was on top of Smith's amplifier, next to her reading glasses and a bowl of flower petals. Burns came in with copies of the set list and taped them to the equipment, and the lights went out and Smith and the band ran onstage. She grinned and said "Hi, everybody" in a little-girl voice, and they opened with "Glitter in Their Eyes," a hard-rocking song from *Gung Ho.* Dan Lilienfeld had hung a white cloth across the back of the stage. He sat at a control center behind the fat girls, projecting psychedelic images and snippets of videos and films onto the cloth. For the next two and a half hours, Smith and the band put on one of the best rock shows I've ever seen. Except for the moments when she stopped to read Blake or tell a dumb joke, or when she went off on a riff about the consequences of Arctic drilling (about which there had been an article in a local paper that day), the crowd was dancing and sometimes singing with her, punching their fists in the air during the anthems and swaying with her during the sexier parts. She played the guitar and the clarinet, and more than once during a climactic moment she climbed on top of the equipment and had to be rescued by Burns. She scattered flower petals over the front row and sang "Be My Baby" in honor of Ronnie Spector and "Sea of Love" in honor of the environment. The guy with the ponytail and the eyedropper didn't move from his spot on the stairs directly in front of her. Occasionally he put his hands together, as if in a Buddhist benediction.

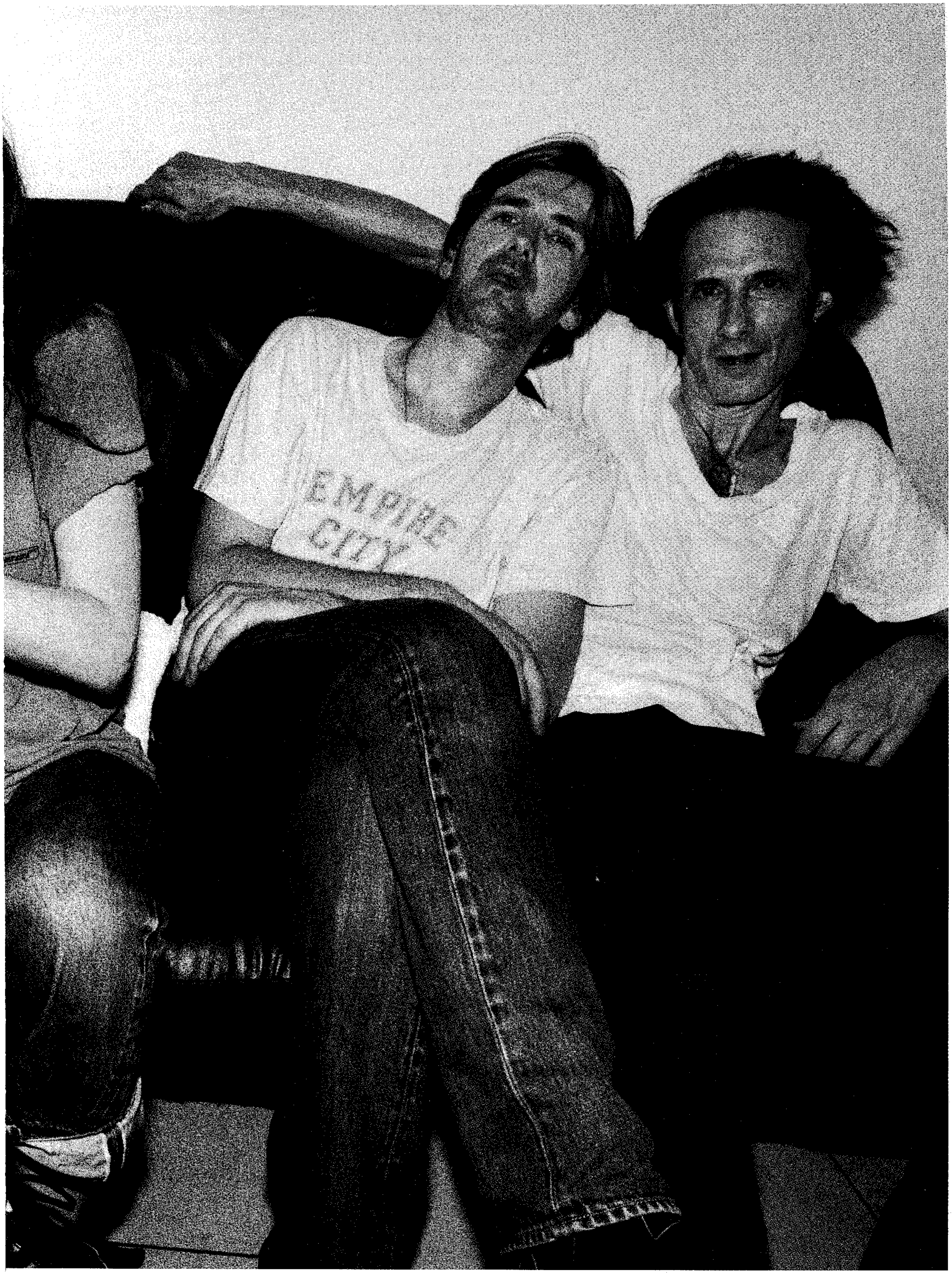
The next day, I drove to Philadelphia with Steven Sebring, who began filming Smith seven years ago, after *Spin* sent him to Detroit to take her portrait. Sebring makes a living doing ad campaigns for Coach and fashion spreads and portraits for various magazines, work that subsidizes the documentary. "I'm interested in doing a really cool film that's not a typical VH1 piece of bullshit," he said. "I sometimes think, How many more Patti Smith concerts can I possibly go to and get something different? And every time I get something completely different. Every 'Rock n Roll Nigger' I've ever seen has been different. The one in the film is completely out of control. I filmed her in Atlanta a few years ago. It was chaos. It looks like people possessed."

Smith changes the lyrics to songs, changes inflections, adds narratives, makes things up on the spur of the moment. The group improvises the way a jazz band does, with her voice as the lead instrument. They follow the set list established shortly before a performance, which reflects Smith's mood and the place they are in and maybe what was on TV that day, but anything can happen within the framework of some songs, and the audience is not a small factor in the equation. "I demand certain things from them," Smith says. "Sometimes people don't understand why I seem frustrated or aggressive or make the night longer than it should be. Sometimes it's because I haven't made a connection, and I'm seeking it, banging my head against the wall."

Shortly before William Burroughs died, in 1997, he provided an epigraph to a book of photographs that Michael Stipe—the lead singer of R.E.M., and Smith's friend—put together during one of her tours. Burroughs used the word "shaman" to describe Smith—"someone in touch with other levels of reality." She comes up with unexpected stories and images. "I use my imagination, things that I've read," she says, "but I also seem to have some kind of affinity or sensitivity for drawing from the people or places where we are. I like to smoke a little pot, but these are not drug-induced things. They are performance- and adrenaline-induced. For instance, once when we were in Salzburg we were going to do 'About a Boy,' which was written with Kurt Cobain in mind. But I was thinking about Mozart and I thought the song would be about Mozart that night. We were outside, and this huge electrical storm was heading toward us. I felt such rage, and I thought, Whoooa, where is this coming from? And I started ranting in the voice of Mozart's father, who was weeping in frustration about his son's ingratitude. When we recorded 'Strange Messengers,' I went into the studio to do a little song about slavery and the abolitionist movement. I had read a lot of books. But then during the recording I felt like this big woman was in my body and I began talking about crack being the new slavery. She was talking to a young man, telling him that his ancestors had gone through all this shit, and now he's enslaving himself to crack. Which is not what I intended to say at all. It was so intense that I had to go home. I was sick with a migraine for two days. You don't want to go too far with this stuff. You don't want to O.D. on an improvisation."

The foundation of Smith's performing style was established early on. "When I lived in South Jersey, a lot of my friends were black," she says, "and I learned about jazz from them. We listened to Coltrane, and to Oscar Brown, Jr., who did long rap poems. I would also go to church with them and see the shout Baptists. But my idea of how to relate to an audience really goes back to watching Johnny Carson with my dad when I was a teenager. My dad loved Johnny Carson. He would come out and do his monologue, which was a new thing in those days, and you would feel that this was a guy who was actually conscious that there were people out there. In the beginning, Johnny was an irreverent, interesting guy. He didn't just do stuff that people had

Smith and the band after a performance in Paris last summer: Jay Dee Daugherty, the drummer; Oliver Ray, guitarist; Tony Shanahan



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ass guitar; and Lenny Kaye, guitarist. They improvise the way a jazz band does, with Smith's voice as the lead instrument.

written for him. And I learned from him. I wanted to be Johnny Carson's successor—that's what I dreamed of. Not of being the next Jim Morrison."

Smith's father died two and a half years ago, and her mother, Beverly, moved in with Patti's sister Linda and her husband. They live in a two-story white frame house with a big back yard in Mantua, New Jersey, not far from where Patti grew up. Linda fixed lunch for me there one afternoon, and Beverly showed me mementos and photographs of the family. Beverly has monitored Patti's fan mail since 1975. She is a well-known figure on the fans' Web site. After Michael Stipe and Patti became friends, in the mid-nineties, he told Beverly that when he was a teen-ager he wrote Patti a fan letter and Beverly wrote him back.

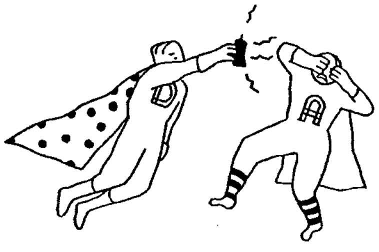
Beverly and Linda are Jehovah's Witnesses. Patti herself was what she describes as "a very serious, active Jehovah's Witness" until she was thirteen. Witnesses are known mostly for not receiving blood transfusions, not saluting the flag, and not serving in the military. They believe in the Bible as an inspired and historically accurate text and in an imminent Apocalypse. Their most visible public activity is "going out on the ministry," as Beverly described it—that is, going from door to door with copies of the church magazines, *Awake!* and *The Watchtower*. Linda still spends a lot of time doing that. Patti gave it up when, as she recalls, "the elders in the church told me that art was a material thing that was not needed in Christ's world." She had read Anne Frank's diary, and she decided to become a Jew, but was discouraged by a rabbi in Philadelphia.

The Smiths lived in veterans' housing in the Germantown section of Philadelphia until Patti was eight, when they moved to a development in Deptford, New Jersey. So Patti was a city kid, transplanted to what was then the country. "There were thousands of fireflies outside my window," she says. "And a pig farm was nearby. There were six-foot black snakes coming into our yard from the swamps. There was the smell of skunk cabbage. My father grew huge hedges around the house—Edward Scissorhands hedges. There was a black barn across the street filled with bats and owls. There were deer." In 1992, Patti wrote a short memoir, "Woolgathering," in a series published by Hanuman Books. She describes sitting at a window in her room at night while her sister Linda and her brother, Todd, who was two and a half years younger than Patti, were asleep. She believed that she could see a community of people, a community that spoke a strange language, moving around in Thomas's Field, the land across from her house. "It was an eidetic vision, much like those that Blake had as a child," Patti says. "I believed that those people lived there, gathering light. And I believed that God inhabited that place."

Linda drove me to their old house. It seemed impossibly small for a family of six. Their father's hedges had been cut down and sheets of plywood had been nailed over the windows. Across the street, Thomas's Field was still a wild place. The old barn had burned down long ago, as Patti wrote in "Kimberly," but Hoedown Hall, the square-dance hall that she and her siblings frequented, was still standing. A vulture was perched on the roof. Patti bought the land a few years ago and intended to keep it in its natural state, but not long after my visit local politicians exercised the right of eminent domain and appropriated it for soccer fields.

Smith had both visions and hallucinations as a child. "I didn't know the difference then," she says, "except that hallucinations were scary and visions weren't." The hallucinations were triggered by illnesses. "I had every single childhood illness—measles, chicken pox, mumps, Asiatic flu, mononucleosis. I was in bed for months with scarlet fever, reading and listening to music." She also had a serious problem with her eyes that caused her to write in mirror image and upside down. One eye "wandered." She was given an eyepatch and therapy, but her family couldn't afford surgery. She often saw double, which caused her to bump into things. "I'd walk into a tree and get yelled at for daydreaming, but I wasn't." She was a tall, skinny girl with thick lenses and an eyepatch.

When Smith was sick, her mother would bring her records. "I'd seen opera on television. Nobody else in the family liked it, but my mother gave me a boxed set of 'Madame Butterfly' once when I was so sick I couldn't even listen to it at first. I just lay there with my hand on it. And then I discovered Verdi. My dad liked classical music and Duke Ellington. He hated rock and roll, but since both my parents worked at night, we'd put rock and roll on after they left. I heard Little Richard when I was about seven, and that really spoke to me. My mother liked Artie Shaw and Judy Garland and high-energy things." Patti listened to jazz, "and Joan Baez, who was my generation's girl role model. Joan Baez and Tina Turner—two great gals." Then one day her mother brought her "Another Side of Bob Dylan," the album with the moody black-and-white photograph on the cover, where Dylan looks like Rimbaud. "That was the big thing for me," Smith says.



A grim version of Patti Smith's life in Deptford appears on "Piss Factory," the prose poem she recorded in 1974. She is backed by a pianist, Richard Sohl, and Lenny Kaye on guitar. The urgent, girlish voice on the record seems thin and unnuanced now, and she hadn't yet learned how to collaborate with musicians. The narrative is based on her experience working in a local factory. In "Piss Factory" she is inspecting pipe with a group of women who "are just too lame to understand, too goddamn grateful to get this job to know they're getting screwed up the ass." The floor boss berates her for working too fast and "screwin' up the quota." She is persecuted by the other workers, who have "nothin' to hide and I got something to hide here called desire. And I will get out of here. . . . I'm gonna get on that train and go to New York City and I'm gonna be somebody."

Smith got out of town early in 1967, after attending Glassboro State College for nearly three years. Glassboro, which is now called Rowan University, was five miles from Smith's house, and she commuted because she didn't have enough money to live in a dormitory. Patti was sexually inexperienced, the kind of girl, she says, who did boys' homework for them rather than go out on dates. "Premarital sex was looked down on. We were remnants of the 'Splendor in the Grass' generation." But at Glassboro she became pregnant. She had the baby and gave it up for adoption.

Among the mementos Beverly Smith showed me was a watercolor that Patti had given her when she was sixteen. A woman with a Modigliani-style head stands next to a sign marked "Bus Stop." She is wearing sunglasses and a sleeveless shift, and she holds two suitcases. The one in her right hand says "One Way," and the other is marked "N.Y." Patti told her mother that if her money ran out when she got to New York or if there was trouble she would come right back home, but as it happened she ended up sleeping in subways and even in a graveyard in Flushing. She met Robert Mapplethorpe at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, where he was studying art, and he invited her to move into an apartment he was sharing.

Beverly Smith says that Patti brought Mapplethorpe home every Christmas for years and that he was "the nicest gentleman you would ever want to meet." He told his parents that he and Patti were married. She had a job at the Scribner's bookstore on Fifth Avenue and Forty-eighth Street, and she supported him while he made mixed-media collages and designed jewelry. He didn't own a camera yet. In 1969, they moved into the Chelsea Hotel, the Victorian Gothic building on West Twenty-third Street that has been home to artists since the late nineteenth century. By the time Smith and Mapplethorpe moved in, the guests included several members of Andy Warhol's entourage and various rock musicians. Janis Joplin, Dylan, and Jimi Hendrix stayed there on and off, and William Burroughs spent a good deal of time at the bar in the El Quijote, the restaurant next door. Gregory Corso, the youngest of the major poets of the Beat generation, lived in the Chelsea, and he began taking Smith to poetry readings. Corso, who was more often than not drunk, yelled at the poets he thought were boring, which was most of them. "Happily, Gregory was a bad influence on me," Smith says.

"I'm combing our finances for all this disposable income I keep reading we have."

Early in 1970, Sandy Daley, a filmmaker who also lived in the Chelsea, made a documentary, "Robert Having His Nipple Pierced." The Museum of Modern Art has a print of the film, and I looked at it recently, although I didn't actually look at all of it, since it's about what the title indicates. But I listened to the voice-over, which is an interview with Smith that was taped after the film was made. In it she says that she couldn't look at the film, either. I thought that she might be jealous. Mapplethorpe is in the arms of a shirtless young man in black leather pants during the procedure, but she says that doesn't bother her—"as you can see, we're not boyfriend and girlfriend no more." She just doesn't like to watch men together, and she explains rather explicitly why, one of the reasons being that "they have secrets." The film is a little more than half an hour long, and Smith doesn't stop talking. Occasionally someone asks her a question, but for the most part she tells hilarious, unprompted stories. She explains why she shaved her eyebrows and why she chopped off her hair so that it would look like Keith Richards's, and she talks at length about Blaise Cendrars, the French poet and novelist whose work influenced Apollinaire. Cendrars is as alive to her as the real boyfriends she and the interviewer giggle over. "I would have fucked him," she says.

Smith had begun writing poetry, and Mapplethorpe arranged for her to appear with Gerard Malanga as part of the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in the East Village. "I had a couple of months to prepare," Smith says. "And I wanted to make it special." She asked Lenny Kaye to collaborate with her. Smith had been writing pieces for *Creem* and other music magazines, and had read an article written by Kaye in *Jazz & Pop* about a-cappella singing—"doo-wop music without instrumental backing," as Kaye explained it to me. "Patti had grown up listening to similar music in South Jersey, and she called up and said she had enjoyed the article. I was a Velvet Underground fan, and I gravitated toward Max's"—Max's Kansas City, the club near Union Square run by Mickey Ruskin, where musicians and artists and members of Warhol's nearby Factory congregated—"and I had seen her there, from afar. She was a very striking figure. After we met, she would come into Village Oldies, the record store I worked in on Bleecker Street, and we'd drink a little beer on Saturday nights and pull records from the stacks and dance to them and hang out."

The St. Mark's reading with Lenny Kaye, on February 10, 1971, established Smith as a public figure. "I got a chance to see what I was made of in terms of performance," she says. She dedicated the evening to crime. "I read the poem that begins 'Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine,' and we did a couple of Brecht songs, but our big song was 'Ballad of a Bad Boy,' a Rimbaudian-type poem about a young fella who was revolting against his cruel and possessive mother by crashing in a stock car. The electric guitar interpreted the crash. That was unique at the time." Nevertheless, Smith thinks that the event has been overrated. "Some of it is who happened to be there. The Warhol people were there. Lou Reed was there. Robert brought his friends from the fashion world. I had met Sam Shepard by then, and he was there. It was a full moon. It was Bertolt Brecht's birthday. Lenny had an electric guitar. And I was in my beyond-gender mode. Maybe that had something to do with it."

Sam Shepard was well known as a playwright by 1971, but he was also the drummer for the Holy Modal Rounders, which is how Smith met him. They lived together in the Chelsea for a time, and wrote a play together, "Cowboy Mouth." It opened in New York on April 29, 1971, at the American Place Theatre. Sam Shepard and Patti Smith played the two lead characters, who appeared to be modelled closely on the authors. After the second performance, Shepard left town and soon went back to his wife. The following year, he wrote "The Tooth of Crime," a linguistically inventive play with a character who, although male, is by most accounts based on Smith. He looks like Keith Richards and "exudes violent arrogance."

After the St. Mark's reading, Smith published three collections of poems, including "Wītt," which Andreas Brown, the owner of the Gotham Book Mart, brought out in a small edition. Brown also arranged a show of Smith's drawings. She had been spending her lunch hours at the Gotham since 1968, when she began working at Scribner's, which was around the corner. She managed the games and humor section, and when Edward Gorey brought some of his early books by she stocked them. Gorey hung out at the Gotham, too. "I'd tell him stories of my childhood and say that he could use them," Smith said. "I had a Gorey childhood." Andreas Brown recalls that in her early poetry readings Smith had a "sweet, sad quality, and the minute she got up to read, another person would get interested in her." Smith says that people assumed she was influenced by Allen Ginsberg but in fact she had not yet read him. "I liked Walt Whitman and Bob Dylan. And Whitman was the father of Ginsberg." The incantatory language of Rimbaud's prose poems, which shaped Smith's sense of what poetry could be, had also influenced the Beats and Dylan, who began reading the French Symbolists in the early sixties.

In 1973, Smith was taken up by Jane Friedman, who had a publicity firm and booked acts into the Mercer Arts Center, where the New York Dolls, an early glam-rock group, were the house band. Smith opened for the Dolls, reading her poems and ad-libbing. She was a regular there until late that summer, when the building collapsed. That fall, she asked Lenny Kaye to play with her again, at an event at Les Jardins, a club at the top of the Hotel Diplomat on West Forty-third Street. She called it Rock n Rimbaud. "I got the desire to sing—little blues songs, Billie Holiday songs. And we decided that we needed a piano player. Danny Fields sent Richard Sohl to us. He was this laconic kid with long curly hair, and he was classically trained. And he had no prejudice about what he played."

"Our act was cabaret-oriented at first," Kaye says. "It was a cocktail trio with Patti out in front. She would do some poems and then we would play a few standards—'Speak Low,' things like that. It was a cool art project." Not something that lent itself to many bookings. "We were offbeat," Smith says. "I didn't have a point of view. I just did what I liked. So our set list would include a couple of Lotte Lenya songs, and a couple of old R. & B. songs, and 'Piss Factory.' I'd get jobs opening up for some gay piano player or something. But people started coming, and Mickey Ruskin gave me some weird jobs, like opening for Phil Ochs. And I got a headline job at Max's. Then around Easter of 1974 I went to CBGBs to see Television"—a group which at that time included a manic poet who called himself Richard Hell and a guitarist named Tom Verlaine, who was inspired by free-form jazz and the Rolling Stones. "There were only about fourteen people there, but I saw what I was looking for. People who were intelligent, who were revolutionary, who were merging poetry and rock and roll. Tom Verlaine and Richard Hell were my kind of people. Television had taken what we were doing another step. That was a great period." CBGBs had opened a few months earlier, and the Television appearances there in the spring of 1974 inaugurated the post-glam, early-punk period in New York music.

In June, Robert Mapplethorpe, who had found a patron, the art collector and curator Sam Wagstaff, gave Smith and Lenny Kaye the money to record "Piss Factory." They wanted to see, Kaye says, "if the intensity that we created live could be captured on tape." A few months later, Smith and Lenny Kaye hired another guitarist, Ivan Kral. In the spring of 1975, the band performed with Television at CBGBs for seven weeks, and they also auditioned for Clive Davis, who had just started Arista. He signed them up. Soon after that, Jay Dee Daugherty, who had been working with Lance Loud's band, joined the group. They had a drummer. "That was our last rock component," Lenny Kaye says. "We had our personality. In retrospect, we had been moving closer to rock all along. Given my influences and Patti's, there's no way we wouldn't have arrived at that."

Smith looks at it another way. "That a snob like me ended up with a rock-and-roll band just goes to show, like Whitman says, we 'contain multitudes.'"

When *Horses* was released, in the fall of 1975, the band played several sold-out shows at the Bottom Line, in New York, and then went on tour for three months. "I said all the things I had to say on *Horses*," Smith says. "It had been developing for years. But we had to do another record, and I started thinking about nonverbal language, like Jimi Hendrix. I decided to express myself through feedback, and I got a 1957 Fender Duo-Sonic, which is a simple guitar. It had a maple neck like a tree, and I put really heavy strings on it. I souped up an amp to get a lot of reverb, and I worked on guitar sounds. We recorded the next album, *Radio Ethiopia*, on August 9, 1976. There was a hurricane and a blackout, and we improvised. Lenny introduced some strong rock chords, but what happened then was up to us. I talked about Brancusi, and my guitar, and the death of Rimbaud. Then we went into Rimbaud's last letter. He wanted someone to help him go back to Abyssinia. And we ended with that. I loved it, but it was our most hated record for a while, although it had some of our most popular songs on it—'Pissing in a River,' 'Ask the Angels,' 'Ain't It Strange.'"

At the crescendo of "Ain't It Strange" Smith sings that "when he beckons his finger to me well I move in another direction," and she chants "Hand of God I feel the finger" and "God make a move," as if she were taunting God. She would whirl around in a frenzy when she performed that section, and on January 23, 1977, at a sports arena in Tampa, Florida, at the most intense place in the song, she fell off the stage. It was a fourteen-foot drop. An ambulance took her to Tampa General Hospital. "It was a full-body trauma," Smith says. She had fractured several vertebrae and was immobilized. She didn't have insurance, but Sam Wagstaff, Robert Mapplethorpe's friend, paid for CAT scans and rehabilitation, which included months in bed and a sports-medicine exercise program.

"It was an accident," Smith says. "I wasn't drunk or fucked up, no matter what anyone says. We were opening for Bob Seger, who had a huge operation, and we had to play in front of his equipment. So we didn't have much space. My monitor was hanging half off the stage. When I put my foot on it, which is something I often do during a performance, I just went over. It was an accident on a practical level, but on a spiritual level it was time for me to assess what I was doing and where I was going. Which I did. I was laid up for four or five months."

Easter, Smith's third album, came out a little over a year after the accident. It includes "Because the Night," which was co-written with Bruce Springsteen and which reached No. 13 in the Top Forty and made *Easter* Smith's best-selling album. (It has sold around half a million copies by now.) The album contains a raucous live version of "Babelogue," the poem that begins "i haven't fucked much with the past, but i've fucked plenty with the future" and ends with "i have not sold myself to god." The audience shouts and stomps throughout the reading. "*Easter* was my most controversial record," Smith says. "I had my armpit hair hanging out on the cover. And it had 'Rock n Roll Nigger' on it."

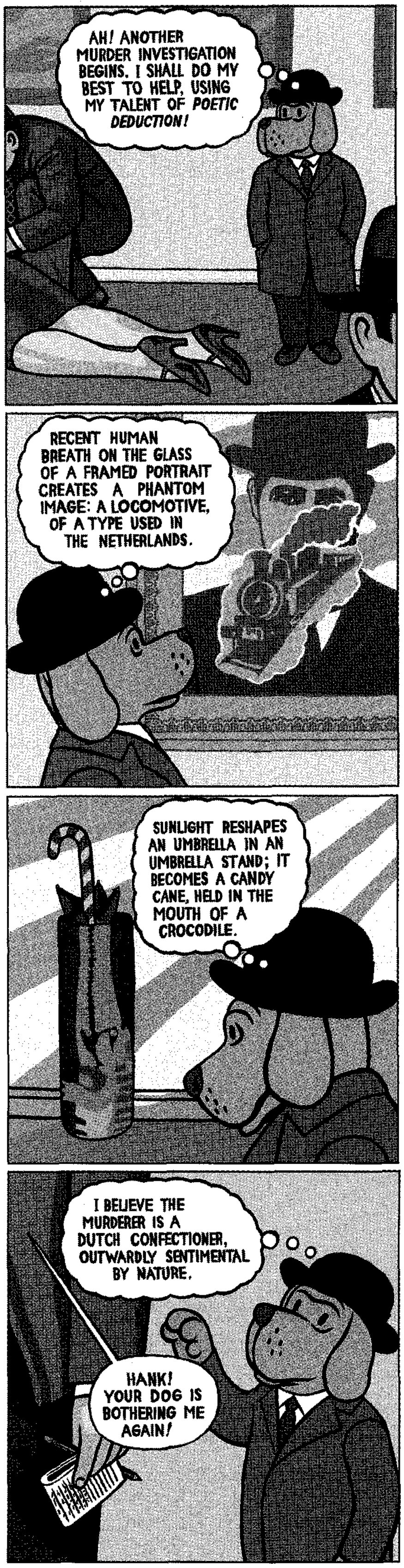
Wave, the album that was released in the spring of 1979, reflected what Smith had learned from the fall from the stage in Tampa. "Seven Ways of Going," an ominous-sounding free-form improvisation by the band, with Smith on clarinet, implies that God has finally won the battle with Patti: "Thou hast lifted me / Woke me up and shook me out of mine iniquity / For I was undulating in the lewd impostered night." Around this time she started changing the introduction to her cover of "Gloria," the Van Morrison song that was the first track on *Horses* and had become a signature piece for Smith in concerts. She had always prefaced the song with an early poem, "Oath"—the one that begins "Jesus died for somebody's sins but not mine." Now she was saying, "Jesus died for somebody's sins, why not mine?" How often she did this and when she switched back was the subject of a lively exchange on the fans' Web site recently. She sang the born-again version at a concert in a soccer stadium in Florence on September 10, 1979. Smith says that when she arrived at the airport "there were tons of paparazzi and I thought that maybe Anna Magnani was there. Or the Pope. I thought somebody really cool must be there. I had no idea that they were there for me. There were thousands of people camping all over the streets." The band played for seventy thousand people, and at the end the audience stormed the stage. "It was anarchistic, but it wasn't destructive," Smith says. "We gave them our instruments. They yelled in the microphones." It was the Patti Smith Group's last performance.

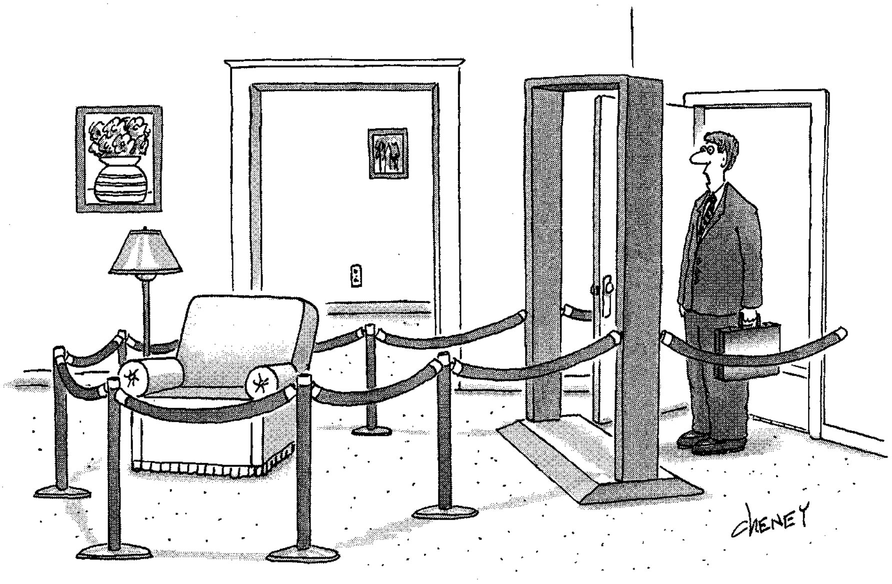
"I felt that I didn't know where my work was going," Smith says. "I was in Italy and people were expecting me to help them with their charities, with their revolutions. I thought, If I'm going to be a leader, where am I leading people to?"

Patti had been living in Detroit with Fred (Sonic) Smith since the fall of 1978, and they were married there on March 1, 1980. Patti's mother showed

McGRITTE

THE SURREALIST CRIME DOG


AH! ANOTHER MURDER INVESTIGATION BEGINS. I SHALL DO MY BEST TO HELP, USING MY TALENT OF *POETIC DEDUCTION*!
RECENT HUMAN BREATH ON THE GLASS OF A FRAMED PORTRAIT CREATES A PHANTOM IMAGE: A LOCOMOTIVE, OF A TYPE USED IN THE NETHERLANDS.
SUNLIGHT RESHAPES AN UMBRELLA IN AN UMBRELLA STAND; IT BECOMES A CANDY CANE, HELD IN THE MOUTH OF A CROCODILE.
I BELIEVE THE MURDERER IS A DUTCH CONFECTIONER, OUTWARDLY SENTIMENTAL BY NATURE.
HANK! YOUR DOG IS BOTHERING ME AGAIN!



"Sweetheart, I'm ho—"

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me the wedding pictures. Patti was wearing a long white antique dress.

Patti's marriage and the dissolution of the band and what appeared to be her retirement seemed incomprehensible to most fans. It was a disappointment and a betrayal. One of the reasons that women come up to her and say she changed their lives is that she seemed so naturally, unambiguously, and joyously free of conventional constraints like marriage. She was a heroine and now she was going to be a housewife. People who knew her personally were as surprised as her fans were. "Why would she give up the poets and the sensitive, swan-necked lovers?" Danny Fields says. "None of her friends understood it." But Patti was in love. She had dedicated *Wave* to Fred. The first cut on the album was a simple, three-chord song with a dance beat that she had composed for him. She later told a journalist that she had written the words to "Because the Night" for him, too.

Patti says that settling into marriage was not anomalous. "I had brief periods of youthful experimentation and frivolity and promiscuity. But I wasn't a sixties person. I didn't want free love and free drugs. In my work, I've raped, murdered, ingested drugs that never existed. But in my life I've been pretty straitlaced on the whole. I've always tried to explain that, but people don't want to believe it."

She had met Fred early in 1976, at a record-company party in Detroit. Lenny Kaye introduced them. "Fred was one of my guitar heroes," Kaye says. He was an original member of the MC5—as in Motor City Five—a mid-sixties to early-seventies Detroit band that played rock music in an improvisational, free-jazz style. "Fred was the feedback king," Patti says. "I couldn't believe what he could do. He could make the amps sound like a violin and like the H-bomb seamlessly." The MC5 had been managed by John Sinclair, who founded the White Panther Party and ran an organization he called Trans-Love Energies. The band had lived in a Trans-Love Energies commune. In 1968, Danny Fields, who then worked for Elektra records, signed the MC5, and they recorded a live album, *Kick Out the Jams*, that stores wouldn't stock because the liner notes talked about "fucking in the streets." Histories of punk rock always cite the MC5 as forefathers. "It was a tragic band," Fields says. "They should have been an enormously popular stadium band, a tough, working-class-heroes band." Fields says that they were unsuccessful because of their naïve association with radical politics. "Promoters boycotted them. They were in way over their heads." John Sinclair went to prison on a marijuana charge in 1969, and the MC5 disbanded shortly after he was released, a little more than two years later. Fred started Sonic's Rendezvous Band, which lasted through the seventies.

The dedication to Fred on *Wave* is "to my clarinet teacher." Patti had taken up the clarinet at Fred's suggestion after the fall in Tampa. He bought her a mouthpiece and helped her get sound out of the instrument. "I started jamming with the band on 'Seven Ways of Going,' but I developed my technique in the early eighties, when Fred and I were staying in a hotel in Michigan. I would practice while I was watching 'The Incredible Hulk.' It's a really square show, but the background music seemed to be in the key of my clarinet, and I would play a meandering melody until Bill Bixby had his transformation. Then I would play in my Albert Ayler style. I have this superhero-transformation thing going on in my mind when I play the clarinet."

Patti says that Fred taught her a lot about music in the eighties. "We listened to music all the time—opera, Beethoven, Chris Connor, Billie Holiday. And he showed me how to play little songs on the guitar." She says that during the time she was married she wrote fiction, poems, and journal entries, and that in many ways it was the most productive period of her life. Their son, Jackson, was born in 1982, and they bought a house in a working-class neighborhood north of Detroit, on Lake St. Clair. This isolated Patti still further, since she can't drive (because of a slight dyslexic condition). Their house was built in the twenties by bootleggers. It is made of stone and has a turret and climbing roses and ivy in a big overgrown yard. "The house has a Gothic feeling," Steven Sebring says. Jackson, who is nineteen and a guitarist, like his father, lives there now.

In the spring of 1987, Robert Mapplethorpe, who was by then very ill because of AIDS, photographed Patti for the cover of *Dream of Life*, her first album since 1979. Fred and Patti wrote all of the songs, including "People Have the Power," which would later become an anthem for her. "That was the kind of song Fred liked," Patti says. "High-spirited rock-and-roll songs. He had concepts for the songs on the album. I was given tasks." Lenny Kaye was not involved. "I knew that the intimacy of their collaboration didn't have a place for me," he says. "I accepted that." Jesse was barely a year old when the album was released, in 1988, and Fred and Patti didn't tour. The record sold badly.

Robert Mapplethorpe died on

March 9, 1989. A little over a year later, Richard Sohl, who had been Patti's piano player since 1974 and who had come to Michigan to work with her and Fred on *Dream of Life*, died suddenly from a heart ailment. He was thirty-seven.

On the evening of July 8, 1993, Smith appeared in Central Park as part of the SummerStage program. I was there, among maybe two thousand people who sat pressed together on the grass in the heat. Smith stood alone at the microphone and read poems and sang, forgetting the words sometimes and losing her place. The crowd was affectionate and seemed pleased to see her after such a long time. People would call out cues to remind her of her lines. She apologized for being unaccustomed to performing, and turned frequently to her right, where a man was standing, nodding encouragement. She chanted "Piss Factory," with its colorful, tough-girl language, but the evening was mostly a sweet and sentimental affair. Patti gave some motherly advice to parents in the audience, telling them to make sure that their kids drank plenty of water.

Patti doesn't talk in any detail about the years she lived with Fred in Michigan. People who knew him say that he had a drinking problem, but Patti won't comment on that. "Fred was a very discreet, deliberative, private person," she says. "He was modest and dignified. Rebellious but also fragile. Very gifted. I really loved him, and he loved his kids. I don't talk about that period out of respect for Fred. There were beautiful things about it and painful aspects.

"Fred was sick for a long time at home. He had liver and kidney problems. It seemed for a while that he was getting better, and then he relapsed. He was part Indian, and he wasn't born in a hospital. He told me long ago that if he ever went into a hospital he would never get out. But then he had to be hospitalized on an emergency basis. He was there for a week. I thought he would pull through, but he didn't make it." Fred died on November 4, 1994.

Patti and the children went to her parents' house in New Jersey for Thanksgiving, and her brother Todd assured her that he would take care of her. Todd and Patti were very close. He had been the manager of her crew in the seventies. He was now divorced, with a young daughter, and lived in Virginia, where he was an accountant. Todd said that he knew Patti could have a career again, and they talked about living and working together. She and the children went back to Detroit, and Todd went home to Virginia. He had had high blood pressure for years and, according to his mother, was negligent about taking the medication prescribed for it. A week after Thanksgiving, he died suddenly of a stroke. He was forty-five.

Smith was living in a house in the suburbs of Detroit with two children, and she couldn't drive. She had very little money. "I was in a bad way, emotionally and physically," she says. "I needed help. And two of my brother's friends, Patti Hudson and Jessie Zoldak, women who didn't know me, drove to Michigan and moved in and helped me get back on my feet."

Other people heard of her dilemma, and she began getting calls. Somebody gave Michael Stipe her number. Danny Goldberg, a music-business executive whom she hadn't been in touch with for years and who had recently been named the head of Warner Bros. Records, asked if she needed a lawyer, which she did. His wife, Rosemary Carroll, was a music lawyer and a fan of Smith's. They offered her their town house in Greenwich Village for the holidays, since they were going to be away. Now, Smith says, Rosemary Carroll "takes care of all of my stuff and protects me."

On New Year's Day, 1995, Smith and Lenny Kaye appeared at the annual poetry-reading marathon at St. Mark's Church, where they had first performed together in 1971. "I was a little frightened," Smith says. "I hadn't been in front of people for a long time, but I thought it would be good for me." They played "Ghost Dance," a song they had written together for *Easter*. It alluded to an American Indian ritual for communing with the dead. "Somewhere around the second or third verse she lost her way in the song," Kaye says, "and she turned to me and I gave her the chord at the top of the verse to ease her in. She took it, and at that moment I knew that we had made it to the other side."

In February, Allen Ginsberg invited Smith to give a reading in Ann Arbor to benefit a Tibetan Buddhist group. That's where she met Oliver Ray, who had driven to Michigan with a friend of Ginsberg's. She saw Ray a few weeks later in New York, and they began playing the guitar together and writing songs. "He was unjudgmental, and he encouraged me to write about what had happened," Smith says. "I wanted to write some songs for Fred. And I needed to record to support the kids. Fred and I had planned on recording anyway, and I had some things to say, but I didn't think about starting a band again. And then

"I'll see if he's emotionally available."

Bob Dylan asked us to tour with him. That was important to me." A version of what would become the new band appeared with her on a tour with Dylan that December, and the following summer she put out an album, *Gone Again*, with songs about Fred. And two songs about Oliver Ray.

When Oliver Ray met Smith, he was recovering from an accident that had nearly killed him. "I had abandoned life and was bumming around Guatemala," he says, "being exposed to a lot of gory Mesoamerican Catholicism and Indianness. I was getting pretty far out. Then I fell off a cliff and had a compound fracture of my femur. I crawled through a jungle for twelve hours." That experience is in one of the songs, "Beneath the Southern Cross," on *Gone Again*. "Falling off the cliff was the greatest thing that ever happened to me," he says. "I felt like God slammed me."

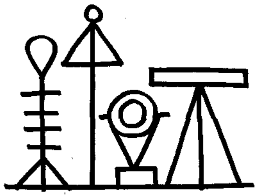
Ray was twenty-two, the son of an investment banker. He had worked for Hanuman Books, the company that published Smith's little memoir, "Woolgathering." During his recovery from the fall off the cliff, he stayed at his parents' house in Manhattan, and began studying the guitar. By the summer of 1996, after *Gone Again* had been released and Smith's band was touring Europe, he was playing with them. "I was aware of the limitations of my skills and my abilities, but that didn't stop me from getting onstage with people who were way better than me," he says. "Tom Verlaine was on that tour, and I complained about not playing on all of the songs." The fans on the Web were comparing Ray to Yoko Ono, but nobody else seemed to notice. "Newspaper critics didn't say anything. That was probably because the guy at the soundboard would mix me down. Patti denies that she told them to turn me down, but sound guys are sound guys, and if they don't like what they're hearing out there they will fix it. What is coming out of the P.A. is a translation."

When he started playing with the band, Ray says, "I was just expressing myself. I wasn't paying attention to what the moves were. But then I began to understand about how a certain kind of rock and roll works. It's more tricky than it seems. It's about playing rhythm in a certain way. I learned onstage, over many humiliating nights." The band works improvisationally, but "there are landmarks," Ray says. "You know what Points A and B are. At first, I thought it was total improvisation, but it's not. It took me a while to learn that. I can't always hear what Patti is saying when I'm onstage, but I respond to what's going on around me. The thing about our band is that we have a drummer and a bass player who can come back after being way out in the middle of nowhere in these walls of sound. They can just suddenly bring it back into the groove."

Oliver Ray now writes the music for many of the band's songs. On New Year's Eve, at the Bowery Ballroom, they played "Climbing Boy," an unfinished ballad based on Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper." Ray says that it "came from sitting with Patti and listening to her play clarinet and trying to find chords that went with the melody she was playing." The *Land* package that comes out this month includes "Wander as I Go," an outtake from *Gone Again* that Jeff Buckley and Tom Verlaine play on. "It's a little song that Patti and I wrote while she was folding laundry and singing," Ray says. "It came together like that."

Oliver Ray and Smith performed together in Austin, Texas, late in January, at a "People Have the Power" rally for Ralph Nader that drew five thousand people. Smith campaigned for Nader for President, and since the election she and Ray and sometimes the whole band have performed at Nader events. "He's an honest man," she says. "He has a code and he lives by it. He's committed to justice for the common man. He's as committed to his work as Blake or Genet were to theirs."

One day late last spring, I went with Smith to a fund-raiser for the Green Party at the Angel Orensanz community center on the Lower East Side. Nader was the featured speaker. Oliver Ray didn't accompany her this time, and she brought the old Gibson guitar that Sam Shepard had given her years ago. It doesn't have a case, and she had wrapped an orange shirt around it for protection. She carried it carefully, because Ray had tuned it before she left the house and she didn't know how to get it back in tune if something went wrong.



The community center is in a rundown synagogue. The walls have been scraped but not repainted, and a gray film covers the flowery decorations on the windows. There was a crowd of maybe three hundred people upstairs, drinking Coke or wine out of plastic cups at small tables with white plastic covers and listening to a speaker discussing something I didn't catch. A more élite crowd, sixty or so of the larger contributors, were downstairs, having a preshow chat with Nader himself. Phil Donahue, an eminent Nader supporter, kissed Smith on the forehead. Nader was explaining why the construction of a new New York Stock Exchange was a bad thing. We needed more habitable jails instead. When he saw Smith, they embraced. "Anything I can do to help, Ralph, I'm ready," she said.

Everybody went upstairs, and Donahue gave a speech. Smith sat on a folding chair at the side of the room, her guitar between her knees. Nader got up and talked about the relentless decline of our democracy and the "billion-dollar boondoggle to build the new stock exchange in the bastion of global capitalism." Somebody introduced Smith as a rock-and-roll icon, and she went to the podium. "People say to me, 'Aren't you sorry for what you did?' "—i.e., campaign for Nader for President. "Well, I have never been prouder," she said. "Voting for Mr. Nader gave me a sense of dignity." Then she sang "Grateful," a song for which she had written both the words and the music. She made a joke—"My guitar playing is kind of like the Green Party. It's getting there." But actually her playing was just fine. She tried to play "Wing," another song for which she wrote the music, but she forgot the chords and gave up and paraphrased the lyrics for the audience. They applauded enthusiastically. Ralph Nader was watching her, standing in a corner eating garbanzo beans with a plastic fork. Smith put her guitar down and began an a-cappella version of "People Have the Power," her arms stretched out at shoulder level toward the crowd, her fingers fluttering in that hypnotic gesture she uses. The muttering at the edges of the room stopped, and the place was perfectly silent.

"Sometimes I wish you were more incandescent—you know, like an Italian."

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Last summer, while Smith and the band were on an around-the-world tour, I received an e-mail from her. She was in Sicily, and she said that she had been given a poetry prize in Turin the previous night and was involved in protests against the economic summit meeting of G-8 nations in Genoa. She had channelled Miles Davis at the Montreux Jazz Festival. The tour had begun at the Roskilde Festival, in Copenhagen, where they played before a crowd of fifty thousand people.

The band appeared in Japan at the Fuji Rock Festival, and then travelled back to the United States via Hawaii. I met them in San Francisco, where they played two nights at the Fillmore. An hour or so before the second performance, rows of glass chandeliers lit up the old Italianate dance-hall space. Andrew Burns, who had been managing the equipment throughout the summer tour, had arranged an Oriental rug on the floor of the stage and put African cloths on the amplifiers. Guitars stood in neat rows on stands, and there were candles and flowers. Smith and the band were in her dressing room, making up the set list from the laminated "Patti's Place" menu of their songs, which has been designed to look like it comes from a diner. Smith was leaner than she had been before the tour started, and the angles in her face were sharper. Her hair was in braids and her jeans were rolled up so that a band of pale skin was visible above her socks. She wore her black jacket and a T-shirt commemorating the first anniversary of a coup in Suriname, which she had picked up when she and Fred passed through there in 1981, on the way to visit the derelict prison colony on Devil's Island.

The show opened quietly, with "Southern Cross," the meditation on Oliver Ray's near-death experience in Guatemala, but in about ten minutes, when Smith was dancing and jabbing her hands at the audience and growling about "God's parasites in abandoned sites," the crowd was dancing, too. She told jokes and read Ginsberg's "Footnote to Howl" ("Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! . . . The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and hand and asshole holy!" etc.), and played the clarinet and the guitar and the harmonica, and covered a Stones song ("The Last Time") and a Buddy Holly song ("Not Fade Away"). During "Rock n Roll Nigger" she blindfolded herself with a Vietnamese flag and ripped the strings off her guitar.

Things were tense at the Roxy in Los Angeles the next night. It's a small club, and a line of fans had formed several hours before the doors opened. There was shoving and screaming, and the manager was muttering about riots. A guy with spiky dreadlocks, several of which were bleached, and a girl in a motorcycle cap found a place to stand near me. Rosemary Carroll was there with Meg Ryan and Rosanna Arquette. When Smith entered the room, everyone—movie stars, L.A. punks, old fans from the seventies—stood, and nobody sat down again for nearly three hours. She sang, "Don't forget who you are, you're a rock-and-roll star," and turned her back to the audience and strafed her guitar, then threw the pick into the crowd. She spat on the floor and played a song to commemorate the anniversary of Jerry Garcia's death. At the end of "Dancing Barefoot," she was standing on a chair, with the microphone in her right hand and her left arm stretched out, singing "Oh, God, I'm back again."

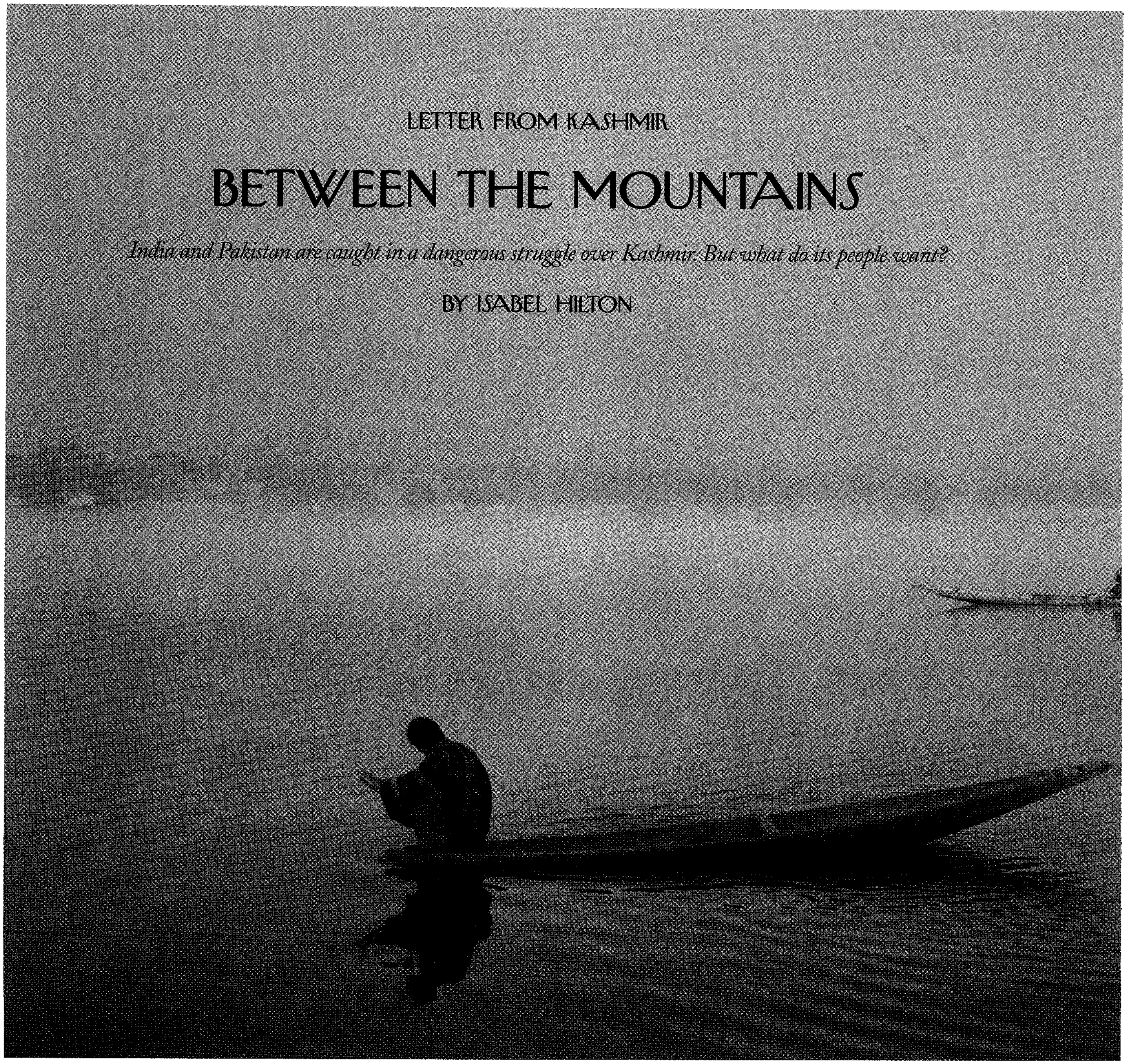
"Sometimes things are just joyfully right," Smith said to me later. "Sometimes, in the middle of 'Be My Baby' or something, when everybody seems so happy, I feel like my bones are electric. I have the band, the people, the night, the new city. I consider myself pretty lucky." ♦

LETTER FROM KASHMIR

BETWEEN THE MOUNTAINS

India and Pakistan are caught in a dangerous struggle over Kashmir. But what do its people want?

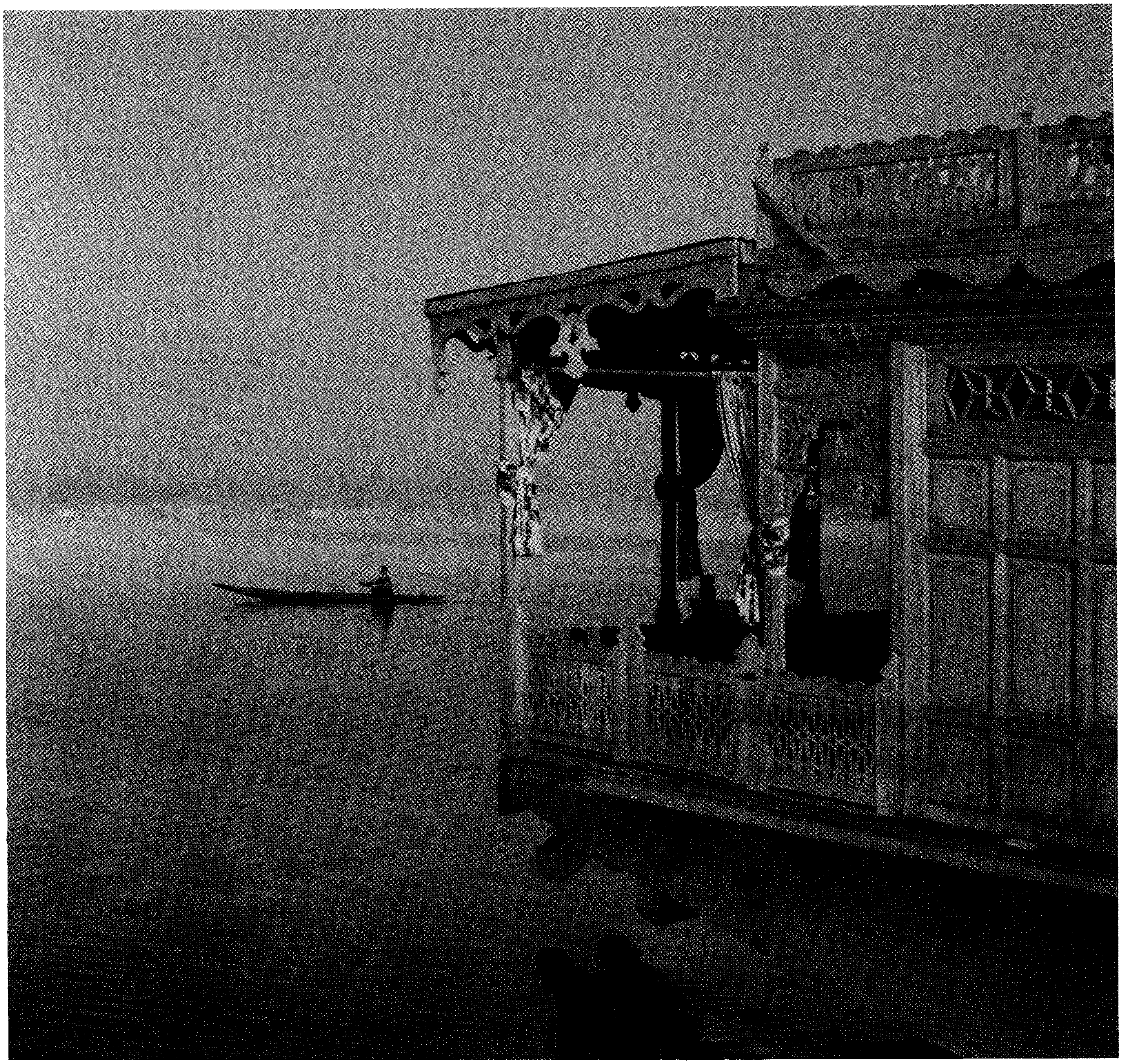
BY ISABEL HILTON



When the French doctor François Bernier entered the Kashmir Valley for the first time, in 1665, he was astounded by what he found. "In truth," he wrote, it "surpasses in beauty all that my warm imagination had anticipated. It is not indeed without reason that the Moghuls call Kachemire the terrestrial paradise of the Indies." The valley, which is some ninety miles long and twenty miles across, is sumptuously fertile. Along its floor, there are walnut and almond trees, orchards of apricots and apples, vineyards, rice paddies, hemp and saffron fields. There are woods on the lower slopes of the surrounding mountains—sycamore, oak, pine, and cedar. The southern side is bounded by the Pir Panjal, not the highest mountain range in Asia but one of the most striking, rising abruptly from the valley floor. The northern boundary is formed by the Great Himalayas. At the heart of the valley lie Dal Lake and the graceful capital, Srinagar.

For Europeans, Kashmir became a locus of romantic dreams, inspiring writers like the Irish poet Thomas Moore, who didn't even need to visit it to understand its charms. "Who has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere," he wrote in 1817, "with its roses the brightest that earth ever gave." So seductive was this landlocked valley that, like a beautiful woman surrounded by jealous lovers, Kashmir attracted a succession of invaders, each eager to possess her.

The Moghuls established their control in the sixteenth century. Kashmir became the northern limit of their Indian empire as well as their pleasure ground, a place to wait out the summer heat of the plains. They built gardens in Srinagar, along the shores of Dal Lake, with cool and elegantly proportioned terraces—with fountains and roses and jasmine and rows of chinar trees. The Moghul rulers were followed by the Afghans and, later, by the Sikhs from the Punjab, who were driven out in the nineteenth century by the British, who then sold the valley, to the abiding shame of its residents, for seven and



a half million rupees to the maharaja, Gulab Singh. Singh was the notoriously brutal Hindu ruler of Jammu, the region that lay to the south, beyond the Pir Panjal, on the edge of the plains of the Punjab.

Under Singh, the Kashmir Valley was conjoined in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. According to one calculation of the purchase, the ruler of the newly formed state had bought the people of Kashmir for approximately three rupees each, a sum he was to recover many times over through taxation. For the maharaja and his descendants and their visitors, the valley was a luxurious paradise; they enjoyed fishing and duck shooting, boating excursions on Dal Lake, picnics in the hills and the saffron fields, moonlit parties in the magnificent gardens. In the penetrating cold of the winters, the visitors, and the maharaja, left the valley to itself and returned to Jammu.

Kashmir was also a natural crossroads. The Silk Route, with its great camel trains from China, passed to the north, and the country's mountain passes opened routes to the Punjab, Afghanistan, and Jammu. Through them successive intruders brought different cultures that added layers to Kashmir's own. The Kashmiri language was a mixture of Persian, Sanskrit, and Punjabi; the handicrafts for which the valley was celebrated were Central Asian; and the religious faith was variously Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim. Sufi masters left a legacy of music and tolerance in their Muslim teachings. A Sikh who had lived many years in Srinagar described the culture of the valley as an old cloth so covered in patches that you can't see the original.

Today, the valley is predominantly Muslim, but, as part of the maharaja's portmanteau state of Jammu and Kashmir, it still shares its destiny with other faiths

Srinagar is a city of waterways, floating gardens, and lotus beds, spanned by nine graceful bridges. Photograph by Mitch Epstein.

and peoples: the Hindus of Jammu, the Buddhists of Ladakh, as well as Gilgits and Baltis, Hunzas and Mirpuris. There had been conflicts between the communities in the past, but by the mid-twentieth century Kashmir was an unusually tolerant culture. It escaped the intercommunal violence that Partition brought to the neighboring Punjab when the British left the subcontinent, in 1947. Kashmir's violence was to occur later, as the two new states of India and Pakistan became the latest of Kashmir's neighbors to fight over it.

Today, Kashmir is partitioned—Pakistan controls slightly less than a third, India some sixty per cent, and China the rest. Most of Kashmir's twelve million people are concentrated in Indian-held territories, and the rest are mainly in Pakistan-held ones; relations among its many communities are now marked by mutual mistrust. And since the late eighties a bewildering number of combatants have fought a savage, irregular war that, in a steady daily toll of killing, has cost, depending on whom you believe, between thirty to eighty thousand lives. On the side of the Indian state, the participants include the local police, the Border Security Force, the Central Reserve Police Force, and the Army, supported by various intelligence organizations and a motley group of turncoat former militants who have muddied the public understanding of who, over the years, has done what to whom. Opposing them are a proliferation of Islamic militant groups. At one time, there were more than sixty of them. Several are fundamentalist and deadly—like the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, which are based in Pakistan (and have been listed as terrorists by the United States) and were recently banned by Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf. The largest group, the Hizbul Mujahideen, is Muslim but not, its supporters insist, fundamentalist, and most of its activists, who number around a thousand, are Kashmiris.

Surrounding the insurgency is the wider, implacable hostility between India and Pakistan. But at its core is the story of a people who, for five centuries, have been longing to call their homeland their own.

Last October, I was permitted to go into what Pakistan calls Azad ("Free") Kashmir, a territory that Pakistan maintains is truly autonomous but which depends entirely on the country's military and money for its continued existence. India calls the territory Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The entity has existed ever since Pakistan wrested this northwest third of the original state of Jammu and Kashmir from Indian control in a war that followed the 1947 Partition. For Pakistan, that war was the first step toward a liberation of Kashmir's Muslims from India. Once liberated, Pakistan hoped, the Kashmiris would join Muslim Pakistan.

At the time of Partition, Jammu and Kashmir was still ruled by a Hindu maharaja, Hari Singh, a descendant of Gulab Singh. The maharaja was one of five hundred and sixty-two fabulously rich feudal monarchs whom the British had manipulated in order to maintain their grip on much of India. At Partition, these states were given a choice of joining India or Pakistan. Independence was not on offer. Most joined India. The maharaja dithered for months, unable to decide between two equally unattractive options. As a Hindu, he did not like Pakistan. As an Indian, he did not like the British. As a prince, he cared neither for the antifeudal Mahatma Gandhi nor for the local Muslim leader, Sheikh Abdullah, who favored autonomy for Kashmir but without its maharaja. Then, on October 20, 1947, armed tribesmen and regular troops from Pakistan invaded Kashmir. The maharaja appealed to India for support and hastily agreed to sign the now famous Instrument of Accession to India: the state of Kashmir and Jammu was accepted as part of the new federal union of India; in exchange, it was, exceptionally, granted a semi-autonomous status. (India would control only matters of defense, foreign affairs, and communications; everything else was to be run by Jammu and Kashmir's own parliament.) Pakistan, furious, refused to accept the legality of the accession, and Pakistan and India fought their first war over Kashmir.

In Pakistan, what is remembered was a promise made by the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to hold a plebiscite in which the people of Kashmir could make their preferences clear. That plebiscite was never held. India blames Pakistan: in 1949, after a ceasefire was agreed to under United Nations supervision, Pakistan failed to withdraw from Azad Kashmir, a betrayal that, India says, vitiated the commitment to the plebiscite.

Today, there are few routes that connect Azad Kashmir with Pakistan proper. Some fellow-journalists and I set out from Islamabad at 6:30 A.M. and drove for five hours along vertiginous valleys, through Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Kashmir, and on into the mountains to Chakothi, a town on what is now known as the Line of Control—the ceasefire line established in 1949, after that first war over Kashmir. There, we walked to a peaceful clearing and sat sipping fruit juice. An immaculately turned-out brigadier, Mohammed Yaqub, the commander of the sector, briefed us on the Pakistani version of the history of the present conflict.

Tensions were unusually high. The United States bombing of Afghanistan had begun, and the military's view was that India might take advantage of the situation—troop movements had been detected. Yaqub's list of the casualties incurred in the last thirteen years of what he saw as Kashmir's freedom struggle against India was startling, even if undoubtedly exaggerated: 74,625 killed, 80,317 wounded, 492 adults burned alive, 875 schoolchildren burned alive, 15,812 raped, 6,572 sexually incapacitated, 37,030 disabled, 96,752 missing.

We took a path that led to a bluff overlooking a tributary of the Jhelum River. There was a slender, deserted bridge. On the other side were the Indian Army fortifications. A line of washing flapped in a light breeze above a series of bunkers. I peered through binoculars at men peering through binoculars at me. They waved. I waved back. A Pakistani officer admitted that, in more relaxed times, he met his Indian counterparts on the bridge and shared tea and sweets. "We don't talk about the war," he said.

Just as night was falling, we stopped at a refugee camp about an hour's drive away. A camp manager called on the refugees to tell stories of the atrocities that had forced them from their homes in Indian-controlled Kashmir. The misery, no doubt, was real, but the exercise smelled too much of propaganda to be of any genuine interest. The message, though, was clear: Kashmir was the unspoken subtext of the Afghan war.

Under President Musharraf, Pakistan had sided with the United States and backed the bombing of Afghanistan. Nearly twenty years earlier, Pakistan had also sided with the United States in its mission to end the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, by enlisting Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, the I.S.I., to arm and train Islamic warriors to lead the fight. The I.S.I. had seen the opportunity to foment discontent in Kashmir, and Islamic warriors were armed and trained and sent there as well. Both wars were seen as religious and patriotic causes. But now Musharraf had renounced the Taliban and his country's earlier ambition to dominate Afghanistan through support of its hard-line Islamist government. Would he also be forced to abandon a dream that Pakistan has clung to since 1947—of uniting the Muslims of Kashmir with the state of Pakistan?

I met a member of one of the Kashmiri militant groups in Islamabad. He called himself Iqbal, though we both knew that it was not his name. He was a good-looking man in his early forties, with black hair beginning to gray. We had arranged to meet in an outdoor café. He was nervous, and constantly scanned the customers until he insisted that we move to a different location. We drove around the city looking for somewhere to talk. Eventually, he took me to a house in an affluent district of the city, a two-story villa set back from the street by high walls. There, we sat on the floor, and he told me his story.

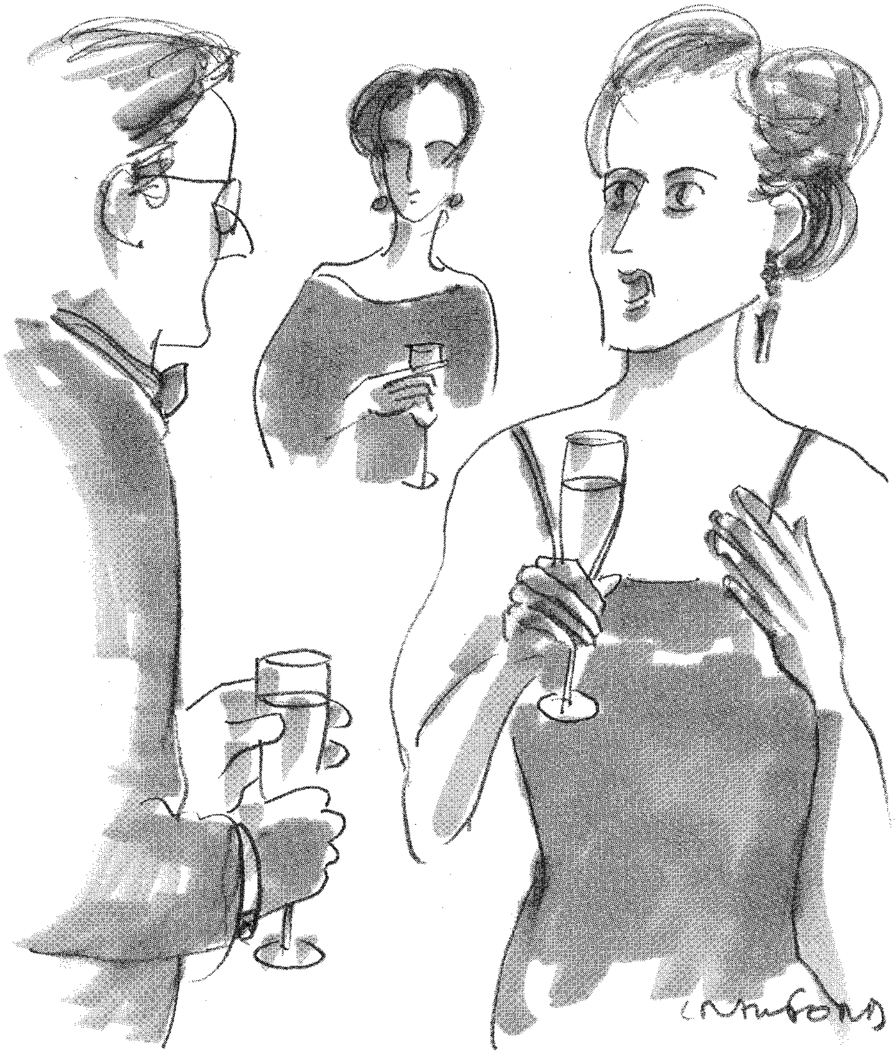
Iqbal had grown up in a Kashmir that preserved the memory—from before the Moghuls—of an independent country. For him, the Instrument of Accession was important because, in granting special autonomy, it implicitly acknowledged the idea of Kashmiri independence. But the Indian government, anxious about Pakistan's ambitions and uncertain of Kashmiri loyalty, regularly encroached on that autonomy. In 1953, Kashmir's popular Prime Minister, Sheikh Abdullah, was removed and arrested (he was suspected of autonomous leanings)—the first in a series of detentions that continued through the sixties. In 1963, a sacred relic—a hair of the Prophet's beard—disappeared from the Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar, and demonstrations erupted. The following year, India passed an order that allowed the Indian President to rule directly in Kashmiri affairs. By then, Muslim sentiments in the valley were hardening.

The long-established Kashmiri tradition of tolerance—the pluralism that had accommodated so many different faiths and cultures—was breaking down in the frustration generated by India's interference. One friend described to me what the valley was like in the late seventies and early eighties. There were, he recalled, fevered political discussions, stimulated by activist teachers who distributed everything from the works of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to the teachings of Mao Zedong. Kashmiris were impatient for change. Their hopes were focussed on elections that were to take place in 1987.

The chief minister was Farooq Abdullah, who had returned to power after having been dismissed by Indira Gandhi, in 1984. He had regained his position by allying himself with the Indian National Congress Party, and many regarded him as a traitor to the cause of Kashmir. The opposition was led by the Muslim United Front, a coalition of ten or so Muslim parties campaigning on a platform of Islamic unity and greater autonomy for Kashmir.

Iqbal was a student at the university in Srinagar and was involved in the electoral campaign. "The 1987 elections were our last hope," he told me. Eighty per cent of the population of the valley turned out to vote. When the results were declared, Farooq Abdullah's pro-India Conference-Congress alliance had—to the dismay and disbelief of the voters—won a two-thirds majority.

The fraud had been crude and blatant. In one constituency in Srinagar, witnesses told me, the result had been publicly declared, only to be reversed an hour later. After the election, opposition candidates and party members were arrested. There were widespread street protests,



"We're going to build in Rhinebeck, once Steven finds the right brick."

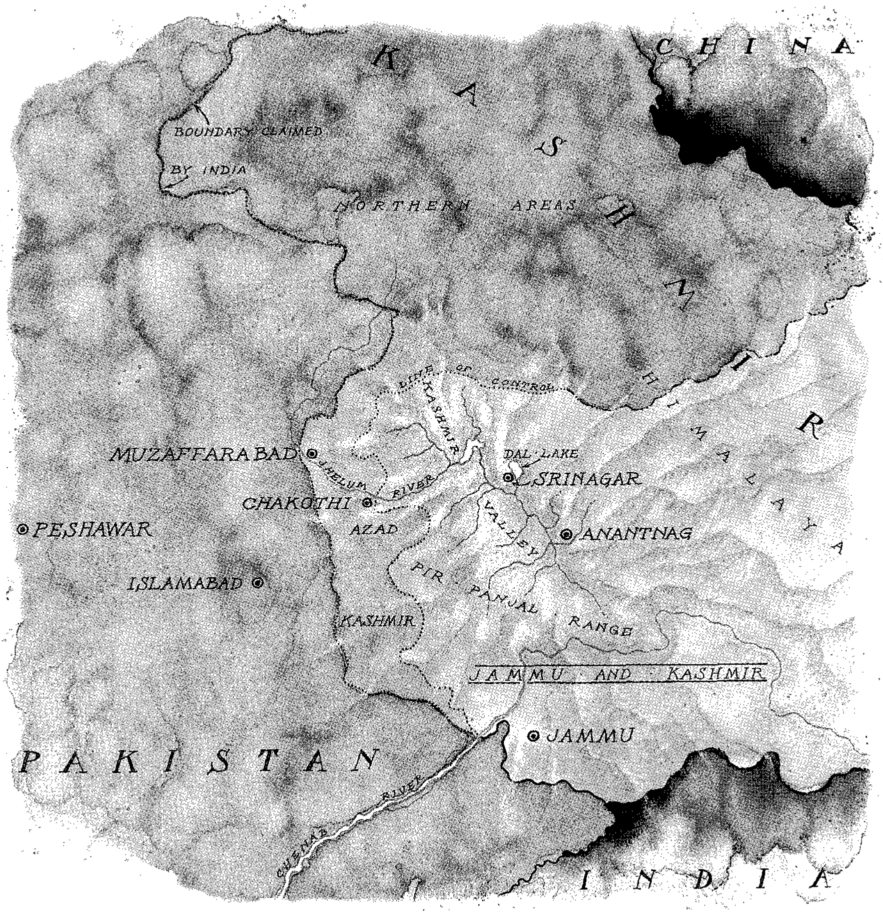
which were brutally suppressed. "When the results were declared," Iqbal said, "people decided that we could not free our land through peaceful means."

Iqbal joined an underground group and was arrested. "I was in jail for two and a half years without trial," he said. When he was released, he was immediately re-arrested and held for another two years. He was released and arrested again.

Iqbal returned to the university in Srinagar, but during an Army search an informer identified him as a militant. He was detained again. This time, he said, he was tortured. (According to Amnesty International, in Jammu and Kashmir torture has become so routine in the arrest-and-detention process that it is rarely reported.) But this time, once he was released, Iqbal took up arms. He joined Hizbul Mujahideen and spent three years as an underground militant. He was arrested three more times, before he finally escaped to Pakistan. He had spent, he said, fourteen years in prison, about half his adult life. "If you want to talk about Kashmir," he said, "you must talk about the eighty thousand innocent martyrs. It's a death rate of fifteen innocent civilians to every one Indian soldier."

A few weeks after I met with Iqbal, that balance shifted, marginally but dramatically, in the other direction. At eleven-forty on the morning of December 13th, in New Delhi, five men dressed in olive-green fatigues and armed with assault rifles, grenades, and explosives drove a white official car, complete with flashing lights and security passes, through the gates of the Indian Parliament complex. The session had just ended, and the politicians were beginning to disperse. It was only after security guards noticed the car turn the wrong way that they became suspicious. A guard ran after it, calling to the driver to stop. Alarmed, the Vice-President's security guard, waiting by his official vehicle, challenged the white car. Gunfire came from it as the car rammed into the Vice-President's vehicle, and the men inside ran toward the Parliament building. In the ensuing firefight, all five terrorists were killed, along with eight security personnel and a gardener. The car was found to be packed with explosives. The target of the assault was the Parliament building itself. Although the identity of the terrorists was not established, the Pakistan-based groups Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed were named by the Indian government, and the Indian press published calls to finish this long quarrel with Pakistan once and for all with a full-scale war.

In Pakistan, President Musharraf condemned the attack and banned the two groups, closing down their offices and arresting dozens of their members as well as other extremists. But in the following weeks tensions between the subcontinent's hostile neighbors heightened, and India began to lay mines along the border. The future of Kashmir was once again reduced to a poisonous contest between these rival nations. Each claimed to have the loyalty of the Kashmiri people and blamed the other for the conflict. In this deafening exchange, the voice of Kashmir was silent.



Kashmir has been occupied by Moghuls, Afghans, Sikhs, and the British, who sold it.

MIKE REAGAN

2.

Ramesh Mahanoori is a Pandit, a Kashmiri Hindu who, like most of the half million people in his community, lived until 1990 in relative prosperity in the Kashmir Valley. The Pandits formed the backbone of the professional class, and filled most of the teaching and government jobs. They had deep roots and high status in the valley, and lived side by side with Muslims, sharing the Kashmiri traditions of song and poetry, eating in each other's houses, sometimes worshipping at common holy sites. The harmony between the communities, so distinct from the tensions and violence elsewhere in India, was part of a general culture—the so-called Kashmiriyat—of which both Hindus and Muslims were proud. Even when Partition unleashed mass murder between Muslims and Hindus elsewhere, in Kashmir neighbors of different faiths preserved their courtesies and communal tolerance.

But between January and March of 1990 that tolerance ended, and a quarter of a million Pandits fled the Kashmir Valley, driven out by murders, riots, and death threats. The Pandits had become early victims of the new Muslim insurgency.

Ramesh Mahanoori was once a teacher in the Kashmir Valley. Now in his fifties, he received me in a tiny one-room house in a refugee camp on the outskirts of the city of Jammu. A large bed took up much of the room. There was a sliver of living space where a child sat on the floor, bent over a book; behind a curtain was a crude kitchen where Mr. Mahanoori's wife could be heard preparing tea. A tap outside served as the bathroom. We sat, cross-legged, on the bed, along with two of Mr. Mahanoori's friends. As we talked, his wife appeared and burrowed beneath the bed.

"That's where we keep the stores," he explained.

For Mr. Mahanoori, the expulsion of the Pandits was a straightforward case of betrayal. It began, he believed, with the Islamist underground, financed by the I.S.I. Its leaders had started organizing in Kashmir in 1986, and after the farce of the 1987 elections their followers increased. In 1989, an orchestrated campaign of executions began. "The first assassination was of a lawyer," Mr. Mahanoori said. "It was followed by other killings—three hundred and ninety highly selective killings of doctors, engineers, educators, judges. All labelled Indian agents. All our intellectuals." The government, he said, gave no protection. "There was a clear message from the majority that they could no longer live with the Pandits. The Muslims were all united under the banner of *azad*—freedom. Pakistan was their mentor."

Warnings were posted that Pandits who remained in the valley would be killed. Muslim activists set businesses on fire as the police stood by. Fear gave way to panic, and families began to leave. There were rumors of death lists in the local mosques. Pandits throughout the valley hastily packed and fled. Many ended up in the Hindu-dominated security of Jammu, in the south, imagining that they would return in a few months. But after they left their property was looted. Twelve years later, most of them are still refugees.

I heard endless variations of the Pandit story. Some people believed, genuinely, that the assassinated men had been agents of the Indian state. Others believed that the violence had been orchestrated from New Delhi (thus the lack of official interference); this way, the Kashmiri insurgents could be condemned for ethnic cleansing and dealt with accordingly. All versions agreed that the expulsion was brutal, sudden, and comprehensive.

Mr. Mahanoori recalled that in the village where he grew up in Kashmir he had been surrounded by members of his extended family. In the flight, they have scattered, and they rarely meet. "We had the same surnames as the Muslims," he said. "We were all related. They just converted to Islam—only three hundred years ago. Our cultures resembled each other. Here, in Jammu, we are aliens. We have nothing in common with these people."

Now there is a generation of children growing up in a world bounded by the camps. For them, Kashmir is a name, the source of their parents' sadness, something that marks them as different from the people of Jammu. They no longer speak the Kashmiri language, Mr. Mahanoori said. He longed for war. India, he said, should go to war with Pakistan, to resolve this issue once and for all.

3.

As I flew to Srinagar, I had few fellow-passengers—some Indian military personnel, a handful of Kashmiris, and one other foreigner. Even the most intrepid trekkers now prefer to explore other, less dangerous mountains, and the tourist trade that used to sustain the economy has dwindled.

The road into the city was an obstacle course made from an eclectic selection of barriers: metal bars set with eight-inch-long spikes, rolls of razor wire, and oil drums filled with concrete, which forced cars to weave a slow slalom path between them. Each barrier was guarded by men with automatic weapons. Beside one, in a bizarre juxtaposition, a poster offered a seductive welcome. "Kashmir—an adventure," it said. "The land of forests."

The light was fading as I reached the last barrier before my hotel, which had been recommended as a secure place to stay. The driver stopped and switched on the interior light. Beyond my own reflection in the glass, an armed guard was peering suspiciously into the car. In the deserted lobby, Muzak was playing to empty armchairs. Three men looked up from the reception desk in surprise. The lobby was so cold that I could see their breath in the dank atmosphere.

India has now fought three direct wars with Pakistan, two of them over Kashmir. For India, the insurgency that began in the late eighties is another war with Pakistan—a proxy war, in which the enemy is Pakistani-trained infiltrators, with weapons and money supplied by the Pakistani intelligence services. This invasion of its territory, India argues, is a straightforward attack on its sovereignty, and demands defending. For India, Kashmir's status is incontrovertible: it is a part of the Indian state, a senior official told me, and there is no negotiation on either sovereignty or territory. India's response, therefore, has been a military one. But the nature of that response has created a conflict with the wider population of the Kashmir Valley.

Early in the morning on January 13th, four days before I arrived in Srinagar, two men were shot dead by Indian security forces, on a road near Dal Lake. Their names were Ahmed el Bakiouli and Khalid el Hassnoui, and it was reported that they were foreigners who had attacked a Border Security Force patrol. In the ensuing incident, the two men were fired on by soldiers on watch in a fortified bunker nearby. By the time local photographers arrived, Ahmed and Khalid were dead.

The fact that Indian soldiers had shot two men was not in itself newsworthy. Since 1947, India has maintained a heavy security presence in Kashmir, one that is now half a million strong. To the local Kashmiris, these forces look and behave like an occupying army. With the exception of the local police—who are regarded with suspicion by the Army and the paramilitary forces drawn from elsewhere in India—few of these forces speak Kashmiri. They, in turn, are far from home, surrounded by people whose language they cannot understand, and threatened by an enemy they cannot identify. To the Indian security forces, anyone they encounter could be a terrorist infiltrated from Pakistan. "If a dog barks in the market," one trader told me, "the Indians call him a Pakistani."

The men the soldiers are looking for belong to any number of dangerous militant groups, many with competing objectives—some wanting independence from India, or an Islamic state, or a union with Pakistan. Several groups began to impose a more severe version of Islam on the tolerant culture of the valley: women were made to wear veils, and bars and beauty parlors were closed down. Foreigners were attacked. In 1995, a Pakistan-based Islamic rebel group kidnapped six Western trekkers: four vanished and one escaped; the sixth was decapitated. There were plane hijackings, which sometimes led to the release of captured terrorist leaders; armed encounters in the mountains and villages; and car bombs and grenade attacks in the cities.

Indian security forces responded with repressive tactics. Shopkeepers and university professors, impoverished farmers and well-heeled businessmen continue to complain of routine cruelty exercised by the security forces during cordon searches: entire districts are sealed off, and the inhabitants are turned out of their houses and made to squat in the cold for hours as the troops ransack their homes. Men and boys are beaten; there are shootings; valuables go missing.

For the Indian security forces, such operations are a necessary part of a war against an unseen enemy—one who might be disguised as a market trader or as a schoolboy or even, as in the case of Ahmed and Khalid, as a pair of out-of-season travellers. But this time it was not just the people of Srinagar who were skeptical of the official account. Ahmed and Khalid, it emerged, were neither Kashmiri nor Pakistani. They were Dutch nationals of Moroccan descent who had ostensibly come to Srinagar as downmarket tourists. They had valid travel documents, had signed in at the Foreign Registration Office in Srinagar, and had been spotted at the Tourist Reception Center by a rickshaw driver named Amin Bakto, who was there looking for business. Bakto had invited them to stay at his houseboat, and they had been there for a week, when, according to an inspector general of the Border Security Force, they had gravely injured two of his men in an unprovoked terrorist attack.

Amin Bakto's houseboat, the Happy New Year, sits in a dirty side canal, greasy green water lapping against the boat's peeling paint. Bakto is a small, spare man, and he talked in nervous bursts, as though he were unable to shake the apprehension that he might somehow be implicated in the events that had led to the deaths of his paying guests. He lives with his family on an adjacent houseboat, and was willing to show me where the two Dutch nationals had slept for the week that they had been his guests.

It was a small room that contained little more than a double bed, which they had shared. Gaping holes in the floor were the consequence of the police search that had followed the killing. The room smelled of stagnant canal. Ahmed and Khalid had paid him two hundred rupees a night (about four dollars), Mr. Bakto told me, a sum that included the use of a heater and breakfast, which he had served himself at nine o'clock each morning. The men were pleasant and quiet, he said, and occasionally played with his children. He never saw them pray or visit the local mosque.

On the day they died, he had gone to offer them breakfast as usual, but found that they had left. The Happy New Year was empty, the doors and windows open. The men had set out along the towpath to a nearby road. By 7:20 A.M., they were both dead, sprawled some twenty yards apart on a road now spattered with their blood. Later, the police had found on the houseboat the packaging to a pair of large kitchen knives, apparently bought in a local bazaar. The knives, in the police version, were the evidence that connected the two Dutchmen to a network of international terror.

No local witnesses came forward to corroborate the security forces' story, and almost nobody I met believed the account. The version favored by the local newspapers was that the patrol had been abusing a local woman, and the two Dutchmen had attempted to intervene. Others believed that they had been challenged by the patrol on their way back from morning prayers. They might not have understood an Indian soldier's command to halt. In either case, they risked being shot.

I went to visit Inspector General Gill, who commands the Border Security Force in Srinagar, and whose men had killed the Dutchmen. I had met him on my first evening in town at a rather stiff party attended by the local commanders of the security and intelligence forces in the district. He had seemed cultured and courteous, and it was difficult to connect

MAN RUNNING

Whatever he has done
Against our law and peace of mind,
Our mind's eye looks with pity of a kind
At the scared, stumbling fellow on the run

Who hears a siren scream
As through the thickets we conceive
He plows with fending arms, and to deceive
The snuffling dogs now flounders up a stream

Until he doubles back,
Climbing at length a rocky rise
To where he crumples and, exhausted, lies
In the scorched brush beside a railroad track.

*

If then he hops a freight
And clatteringly rides as far
As the next county in a cattle car,
We feel our sense of him disintegrate

In rumors, warnings, claims
That here or there he has appeared—

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Tall, short, fierce, furtive, with or without a beard.
Still, in fidelity to childhood games

And outlaws of romance,
We darkly cheer him, whether or not
He robbed that store, or bank, or fired that shot,
And wish him, guiltily, a sporting chance.

*

Ditching the stolen truck,
He disappears into a vast
Deep-wooded wilderness, and is at last
Beyond the reach of law, and out of luck,

And we are one with him,
Sharing with him that eldest dread
Which, when it gathers in a sleeping head,
Is a place mottled, ominous, and dim

Remembered from the day
When we descended from the trees
Into the shadow of our enemies,
Not lords of nature yet, but naked prey.

—*Richard Wilbur*

him with the acts of torture and repression blamed on the men he commanded.

He had suggested that we meet at his bungalow in a hilltop compound that houses government servants. At the first barrier, my car was searched, and the driver and I were body-searched. At the second barrier, we were assigned guards to take us through the third barrier, where an armored car was parked, guarding the approach road. The final barrier was beside the compound gate. From there, I walked to the house. We talked in a small, bare sitting room, warmed by a large metal stove that crackled in the corner.

Gill is a slim man of fifty-one, a Sikh from the Punjab. For him, there was no doubt that the two Dutchmen were terrorists. Their attack, he said, had been unprovoked. They had inflicted eight stab wounds on his men before they were shot; one of his men lost an eye. For Gill, the Dutchmen reinforced his conviction that the war in Kashmir was sustained from outside—a Pakistani proxy war. He admitted that there was no evidence of a Pakistani connection in the Dutchmen's case. "Do I have to prove that everyone has a past career?" he asked me plaintively. He held to his general point: If Pakistan, with its connections to international terror, would stop sending militants into Kashmir, the trouble would subside overnight. It was a conviction that was shared by the Indian government and widely reflected in India's national press. Besides, he insisted, his men did not shoot people without cause, and the many allegations of torture and disappearance made against his forces were scrupulously investigated. And almost none, he said, stood up.

The local press was unconvinced, even though it had been thoroughly briefed on the incident by Gill himself. The widely held feeling in the valley is that the insurgency is no longer masterminded from Pakistan or anywhere else: the native-born movement is now well established, after years of Indian abuses. And that feeling was reinforced by the killing of the Dutch tourists, regardless of what actually happened. Perhaps the men, armed only with kitchen knives, attacked a military patrol. But the belief is that this army of occupation can shoot anyone it wants to, anytime, with impunity.

I tried to explore the region around Srinagar. The roads to the border, where Indian and Pakistani troops continued to exchange mortar fire, were blocked with snow. To travel outside the city was dangerous. The splendid Moghul fort perched on a hill above Srinagar was occupied by the Army. I found myself circling the city, trying not to feel caged. The streets were wet and muddy, with piles of dirty snow. The light was flat and weak, filtered through a morning fog that rarely dispersed during the day. As I drove around, the sense of military occupation was oppressive. On every street, people were being stopped and searched by Indian soldiers, taxi-drivers opening the trunks of their cars for inspection, lines of bus passengers waiting to be frisked. My car was frequently stopped, my documents inspected, and my driver closely questioned. I was harangued by Indian soldiers who considered the stamp on my press pass insufficiently clear.

In the evenings, Srinagar was subdued, and the tension was unmistakable. As night fell, the people I met and talked to often began to fidget, caught between the obligations of hospitality and their anxiety that I leave before the streets became unsafe. Nobody, they told me, goes out after dark. A tremulous sociology professor described to me the social effects of the long war—migration, unemployment, broken families, a startlingly high rate of suicide.

"It's the constant fear," he said. "Torture, tension. Even at home, the security forces can arrive at any minute. We used to be a leisured people. Now all our entertainment has gone. It's out of the question to go out."

Education had deteriorated in the wake of the Pandits' departure, he told me; young women cannot find husbands, married women are widowed and destitute. He urged me to walk around the old city, a district I had been warned against, to discover how people really felt. It was a hotbed of militancy, I was told, and subject to constant cordon searches.

"Talk to people," the professor said. "No one will harm you." After a pause, he seemed to think better of his assurances. "Don't tell anyone in advance. Don't make an appointment, in case, in their innocence, they tell someone you are coming. And don't stay more than half an hour in the same place."

It was now dark, and he was agitated. I drove through the rapidly emptying streets, ready for another evening of chilly confinement in my hotel. But that evening I had a visitor.

I had called Commander Chauhan, of the Border Security Force, several times, and now he appeared, exuding friendly confidence, eager to show me the sights—at 9 P.M., long past the hour when civilians had abandoned the city. The Commander was a portly, bespectacled man dressed in a camouflage jacket and a black beret, and carrying a polished swagger stick and a walkie-talkie. He bustled jauntily into the hotel's freezing dining room and greeted the waiters by name. The waiters smiled anxiously.

The Commander was eager to stress that he had excellent relations with the local people. His job, he said, was to protect them from the militants. His unit had adopted a girl who had been attacked with acid by Islamic fundamentalists for failing to wear a veil. There were orphans whom his men took care of. And, he assured me, they were steadily weaning the Kashmiris off Islamic extremism. Normality, he announced, was visibly returning.

"You see girls driving cars, boys and girls on motor scooters, going out to the lake, going to hotels, cinemas, and beauty parlors," he said. I had seen none of those things.

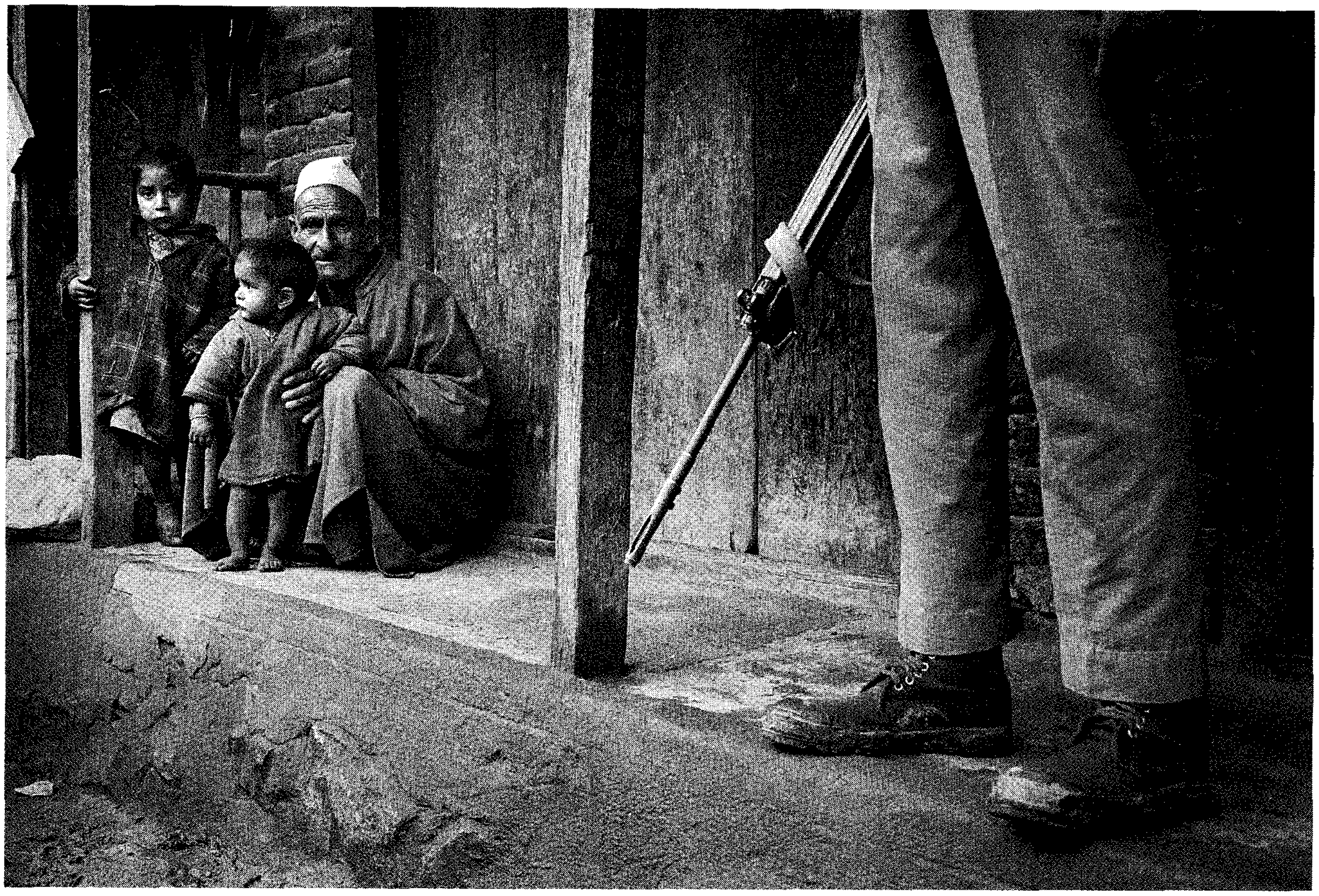
The security forces, as he described them, were dedicated to social welfare: "If someone's wife goes into labor in the evening, they just ring up. I send a car to take her to hospital. I have had so many calls to say thank you."

I didn't doubt it. Anyone moving around the city at night without military protection, pregnant or not, risked being detained as a terrorist. As though reading my thoughts, Commander Chauhan suddenly said, "What have you seen? I wish we had met earlier. I could have taken you on the lake. We have motor launches, you know. I'll take you out now, to see the city."

Outside, his jeep backed slowly to the door, as six soldiers armed with automatic weapons walked alongside. I climbed into the front, the Commander took the wheel, and the soldiers jumped into the back. Another vehicle moved up behind us. We then pulled out into the deserted street and embarked on a tour of the city.

"This is the polo ground," he said. He waved a hand vaguely at the darkness. "But they don't play much polo these days. And here—this is the golf course. Excellent golf." We drove on in the empty street. "This is the canal." We turned toward the lake. "Have you seen the Nishat Gardens?" he inquired.

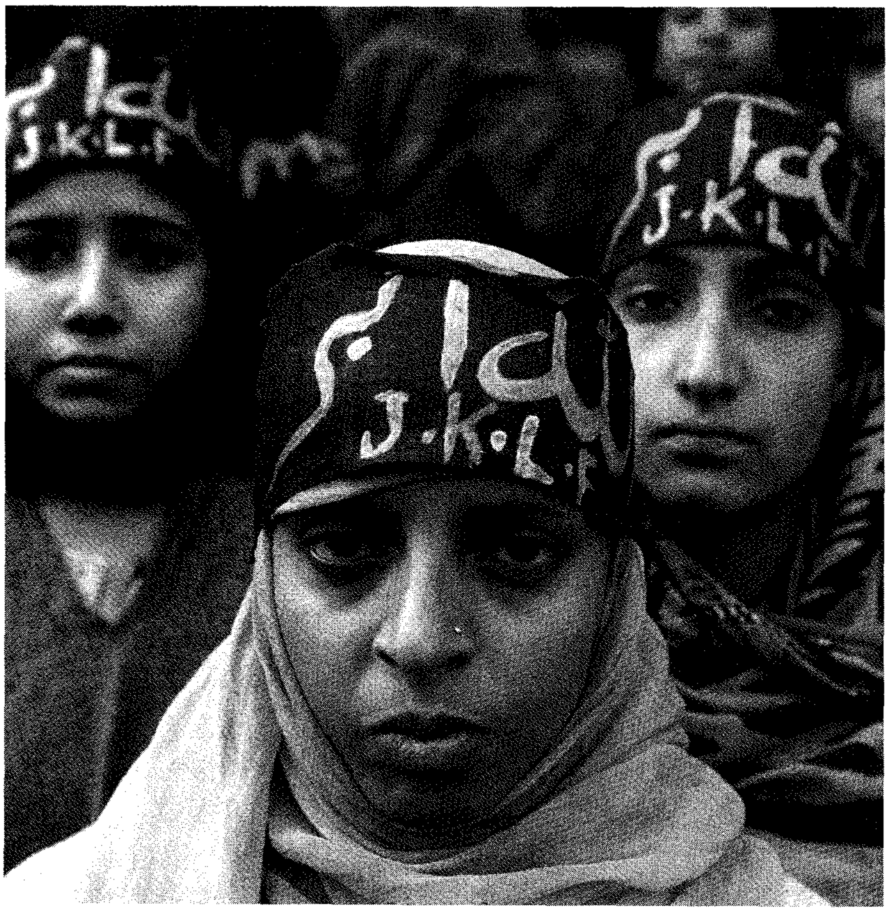
Before I could reply, I was blinded by the beam of a searchlight which had appeared from inside a bunker. The Commander braked sharply. A man jumped out from the back of our vehicle and explained our presence to a group of ner-



"We are keeping them safe," an Indian officer said of the Kashmiris. "You never know which vehicle a terrorist might be driving."

MARTIN ADLER/PANOS

vous soldiers whose guns were trained on him and on us. Satisfied, they allowed us to pass, and the Commander continued with his description of the delights of boating on Dal Lake. I found myself recalling an incident described to me by a lecturer in the English department of the Srinagar university. A group of graduate students doing research on the lake one day were shot dead in their boat.



Members of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, a pro-independence group.

ABBAS/MAGNUM

A few hundred yards further on, we found ourselves inching around oil drums and rows of spikes in the road, and came to a stop before a final improvised barrier of rocks—and another checkpoint. At the next bunker, however, we failed to stop in time, and there was a fusillade of hostile shouts. Commander Chauhan braked violently. A soldier in the back climbed out, his hands raised, and stood for several minutes in front, in the glare of the headlights, trying to talk down the guard whose gun was trained on him. I held my breath. Five more guns were pointing at the jeep. Even Commander Chauhan had fallen silent. At last, the soldier gradually lowered his arms.

Commander Chauhan had lost a little of his bounce. For the first time, he seemed to feel that he should acknowledge the surreal character of a city tour in which even a senior officer risked being shot by his men. "Actually," he said, "we give them orders that every vehicle must be stopped. You never know which vehicle a terrorist might be driving." As he picked up speed, his faith in his mission returned. "We are keeping them safe," he said. We turned back through the deserted streets of the old city. There was hardly a light showing, but for Commander Chauhan this didn't mean that people were afraid to go out. "Look," he said triumphantly, "they are all in bed with their wives and their blankets, and my men are out here, keeping them safe!" Suddenly, he turned to me. "What did people tell you, by the way?"

"They said they wanted independence," I replied bluntly. "That they were afraid of your men and their searches." I stopped short of telling him how many rejoiced when Indian soldiers were killed.

"Did you ask them why we search them?" he said.

I had not, of course, though I could imagine Chauhan doing so, chattering as he frisked people, in an exercise in hearts-and-minds didacticism, cheerfully explaining his motives as their humiliation deepened.

I asked him how many terrorists he thought there were.

"Very few, these days," he replied.

Why, then, did the government need to keep half a million men here?

"Because," he replied quietly, "you don't know who they are."

4.

The conflict over Kashmir has entrenched the worst suspicions that India and Pakistan nurse about each other. For India, the separate Muslim state of Pakistan represents a rejection of the secularism that India believes to be essential to keeping its own rival religious communities at peace. If Kashmir's Muslims were to join Pakistan, what signal would that send to the more than a hundred million Muslims elsewhere in India? For Pakistan, India's refusal to allow Kashmiri Muslims to join the Pakistani state merely confirms its conviction that India never abandoned a long-term ambition to establish Hindu domination on the subcontinent, or that it even accepted Pakistan's existence. But for the people of the Kashmir Valley, with their distant dreams of independence, neither neighbor offers a solution. Pakistan's muscular Islam is at odds with Kashmir's Sufi-inspired traditions. The Muslims and Pandits of the valley speak a different language from the language of India or Pakistan. Neither country is home, and each, in turn, has been a threat: after all, it was the incursion of tribal raiders from Pakistan in 1947 that brought Indian troops in retaliation.

Thirteen years into the insurgency, the local politicians in Kashmir, like the competing militant groups, have conflicting objectives. Even members of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, which was formed in 1993 by more than thirty political parties to act as a voice of a people who felt themselves disenfranchised, are quarrelsome and deeply divided. I met many members, and asked them what they wanted for the country. I got many different answers. One wanted union with Pakistan. One wanted independence. Others would be happy with real autonomy within the Indian state. Some had links to the militants; others did not. Each claimed to represent a general majority.

From civilians I got a different picture. Weary of war, few believed that anything could be won, now, through the armed struggle. But few supported Gill's contention that the hostilities would end once Pakistan stopped supporting them. I understood this view when I met some of the young new recruits. There seem, potentially, to be an endless number: the war's capacity to create new militants is limitless.

Militants are buried in Srinagar's many martyrs' cemeteries, some of them large adjuncts to regular graveyards, others crammed into small corners across the city. They are crowded with almost identical concrete gravestones, covered in Arabic inscriptions in green lettering. A few bear English place names—"Birmingham" was one I noted—an indication of Kashmir's appeal to disaffected Western-born Muslims looking for a cause.

But exactly what that cause was, beyond the single word *azad*, was unclear. As I looked at the gravestones in one of the smaller cemeteries near Dal Gate one day, a group of boys gathered around me and laboriously translated the inscriptions. They were eager to show me significant graves—Islamic warriors from faraway countries, or men whose spectacular deaths had stuck in their memories. They pointed out professionals—lawyers, teachers, doctors—and men who had died under torture. They called all the dead "martyrs," but they couldn't always tell me what they had died for—whether they were martyrs to Kashmiri independence, or to the union with Pakistan, or simply to Islam. One grave that was pointed out to me belonged to Aafaq Ahmed Shah, who, at the age of eighteen, had become briefly famous for inaugurating a new phase of the militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed's war, that of the suicide bomber. I had earlier visited his family in the old city.

His mother had opened the door and stood on the doorstep looking at me. She was a small, middle-aged woman with dark circles under her eyes, and she knew, before I explained, what I had come for. She remained immobile, tears flowing down her face, reluctant, it seemed, either to turn me away or to admit me to what she knew would be a painful rehearsal of her grief.

Still sobbing, she let me in, and I sat on the floor of a freezing room, waiting for her husband to return from the market. Mohammed Yusuf Shah was a thin, elderly man, a retired college teacher, dressed in a brown *pheran*. He settled beside me as his wife brought blankets and fire baskets and poured us cups of chai from a thermos flask.

"My son was nearly nineteen years old," Mohammed said. "He wanted to be a doctor. There's a photograph of him"—he waved his hand vaguely—"somewhere, wearing a stethoscope." He made no move to get it, as though already discouraged by the effort. His wife had begun to cry again.

"Mysterious are the ways of God," he said. There had been no warning that his son would join the militants. "He willed it. He did it. That is all. He was a good, silent, obedient boy. He was my son, but, more than that, he was my friend. He was here, dawn to dusk, every day, day and night."

On March 25, 2000, the boy disappeared. The family searched for him, fruitlessly. Three days later, he telephoned. "Father, I left," he said, and hung up.

On April 19th, dressed in an Army uniform and carrying an Army I.D., Aafaq tried to ram his car through a heavily fortified gate of the Army's XV Corps headquarters, near his home. The car exploded after a soldier started firing at it. Five soldiers were injured; only one person was killed—Aafaq, who was blown to pieces. The family read of his death in the newspapers.

I found another family of a young martyr in a village some thirty miles outside Srinagar. We drove along long straight roads lined with tall poplars, past fields of saffron that were just showing a first flush of green shoots, past empty paddy fields, waiting to be planted. The village itself was along a muddy track, buried among trees, peaceful in the chilly morning. "Ignorance is the root of all evil" was carefully painted on the wall of the village school.

I sat on the floor of the family's small living room as villagers crowded in, competing to tell the story of Nazir Ahmed Khan.

"Nazir was in the tenth class," a young neighbor told me, and also wanted to be a doctor. "His hobbies were gardening, photography, and cricket."

Nazir's elder brother, Mohadin, drove a taxi to support the family. There was a skirmish in a nearby village, and the Army appeared at the door, convinced that Mohadin had driven a

"Hold it—there's another story I'm following."

wounded terrorist to the hospital. Mohadin was not at home, but Nazir and his father were. They were interrogated, but the soldiers were not satisfied, and the father and son were both beaten, and then their limbs were held over a fire. Afterward, Nazir ran away. "He could not bear being tortured for no reason," the neighbor said. He had gone to join the militants.

Mohadin was summoned to the Army barracks, and he, too, was tortured and then imprisoned. The family sold the taxi to bribe the Army for his release; it was their only asset. And then Nazir was killed.

I went to see where he had died. We drove back to the main road, past a sign that read, "Our job is to make everybody see the beauty of Kashmir," then turned down a muddy track to the village. We inched along the narrow streets until a villager pointed to the house: the roof at one end had collapsed, and its supporting wall was a pile of rubble. I scrambled up the slippery lane and pushed open the ramshackle corrugated-iron gate. A small crowd followed me in.

The boy had joined two other militants, and the three of them, the villagers told me, were hiding in this house. An informer told the Army. The cordon search lasted for three days and three nights, and the entire village was made to squat in the cold on the recreation ground. Fire baskets and the old men's woollen hats were confiscated. Ten thousand soldiers came, I was told. I said that ten thousand soldiers is a very large number. The villagers insisted.

Cornered, the militants gave themselves away—one of them fired on the soldiers from an upper room—and the Army ordered seven villagers to walk up to the house and put two explosive devices inside. Everyone knew that the villagers wouldn't be harmed. It was, they said, a frequently used tactic. "The militants don't fire on civilians," a villager explained. "If you refuse to do it, the Army shoots you." The villagers got out before the devices were detonated. Nazir was eighteen, and had been a militant for a week.

"Mom, please! I'm a married woman whose friends have been reviewed favorably by the New York Times."

• •

Later this year, there will be elections in Kashmir—the opportunity, in principle, for the people to express their political will. But, after years of vote rigging and intermittent direct rule, Kashmiris have lost their faith in India's secular democracy. For the politicians in the loose coalition of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, there is no point in even standing. To do so would require their swearing an oath of allegiance to the Indian state, which they do not wish to honor. And, at the very least, they want an autonomy that they believe India's current government—dominated by the Bharatiya Janata Party, an organization with an aggressively pro-Hindu ideology—will never grant. On February 12th, the Hurriyat announced that it would boycott the Indian elections and hold an election of its own—to choose representatives who will sit at a negotiating table with India and Pakistan. But India is not going to give up Kashmir, and the negotiations have no hope of succeeding.

President Musharraf, too, has called for negotiations, and on February 6th the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, offered to mediate. For Musharraf, negotiations could be the key to his survival. He has declared his wish to make Pakistan a more secular state, attempting to dismantle the networks of Islamic extremists who, for the past twenty years, have systematically infiltrated Pakistan's government, Army, and, especially, its intelligence services, the I.S.I. These people are viscerally opposed to Musharraf's ambition. If he is to succeed—if, at the very least, he is to put an end to the I.S.I.'s support for cross-border Islamic terror—he needs to show that the cause of the indigenous Kashmiri struggle has not been abandoned. India, meanwhile, has not taken up the offers for negotiations.

In Kashmir, an end to the struggle seems ever more remote. Nazir, like Aafaq, had joined the ranks of the martyrs in a war that has lost its way, a war that now feeds on itself—each act of violence generating a new response that generates more recruits. For some of the valley's young men, it can seem as though there were little else to do—the war is their occupation. The Kashmiriyat is now a forlorn memory, and has been replaced by the cult of the gun. The people of the valley believe they are trapped in a war without end, in which anyone can become a victim. Tens of thousands have died. Scarcely a family in the valley is untouched. ♦

FICTION

AN UNFAIR QUESTION

BY SAM SHEPARD

I was the one who volunteered to go hunt down more basil for the party. My wife very pointedly held the last tiny clump of it under my nose so I got the full authentic aroma, the shape and color of the leaves, as though I might confuse it somehow with mint or watercress. "Fresh basil. Make sure it's fresh," she stressed. "They have it up at Rainbow Foods, I think. That's probably the only place you'll find it on a Sunday." She smiled and turned back into the fray of family women chopping garlic, boiling rice, and clanging pots and pans around. I was glad to have an excuse to get out of there and away from all the frantic urgency of guests arriving. I can't even remember now what the celebration was all about. It wasn't a death and it wasn't a wedding. I remember that much.

I was looking forward to the ride alone in the car, up the long hill to Rainbow Foods—a twenty-four-hour supermarket on the edge of town in one of those early-sixties malls that had been made obsolete by newer, more strategically placed malls. I liked the wide, maple-canopied Midwestern streets where the twenty-five-m.p.h. speed limit was accepted as though it were part of the Lutheran credo and where if you had the audacity actually to pass anyone you were honked at vigorously but rarely given the finger. Minnesota pedestrians tended to stare right into your car as you passed, studying every inch of your face with an almost desperate expectation of finding something—some clue in the eyes of a total stranger. What could they possibly be looking for? I don't know any other region of the country where they stare into your car with such bewilderment. Maybe it comes from surviving too many long winters and lutefisk church buffets.

I parked in the huge, almost empty parking lot skirting Rainbow Foods, a parking lot that at one time must have held high hopes. Now there were only three pathetic beater cars bunched together, probably employee-owned, real rattletrap Minnesota cars with the rusted-out scars of bitter blizzards and salted roads. A kid with a long green apron and a backward baseball cap was pushing a line of shopping carts, snaking them back toward the electric doors of Rainbow Foods. I turned the ignition off and watched him heave his wafer-thin body against the weight of the carts, inching them past all the abandoned, out-of-business storefronts: The Pet Palace, Nora's Nails, 24 Hour Developing. The plate-glass windows of each store were blocked out halfway up with brown butcher paper, I guess to keep people from looking in at all the emptiness. I got out and squeezed the button on my remote-control door lock. This is an affectation I'd long despised in other drivers, but now I find myself not only doing it but enjoying the sensation of detached authority it gives me. I especially enjoy it when the car beeps and blinks back at you, confirming that everything is locked and secure. I stood there for a long while in that almost empty parking lot, just facing the car door and pushing the button over and over, watching the lights blink and listening to the horn honk, until I noticed that the kid pushing the carts had stopped and was staring at me as though I might be dangerous. I smiled and pointed my remote-control button in his direction. He immediately fled with his train of carts, toward the doors of Rainbow Foods. A sudden great feeling of freedom and aloneness swept over me. I stared out at the deep-gray swirls of clouds against the setting sun. The prairie wind was whipping a rope on the tall aluminum flagpole, making a rhythmic clanking while, at the top, a gigantic American flag popped and snarled like it was trying to bite itself in the ass. A V of geese slid silently across the long silver shelf of clouds, silhouetted against the sunset. Usually, they make that frantic honking, as though pleading with some unseen force to get them safely back down to earth, but these were completely silent. I couldn't even hear the snap of their wings as they passed over.

I went through the electric doors and the air-conditioning blasted me in the chest. There was no one in the place except for the kid with the green apron, who was now spraying the carrots and bok choy with a fine mist from a water wand. He didn't see me. I started hunting for basil. There was no basil. There was spinach and parsley and turnips and endive and celery, but no basil. I made a special double check, going back through the racks of dripping colorful vegetables, wishing I could be transported to some of the places where they'd originated, like Gilroy, California—"Garlic Capital of the World." I walked over to the kid with the apron. He was still waving the water wand back and forth over the parsnips. The gentle mist hit me in the face and filled me with a great sense of joy. I don't know why. Pure joy. "Seen any basil?" I asked the kid. He turned and stared at me vacantly while he continued to wave the wand around. The mist floated up between us.

"What's basil?" he said.

"It's green; small leaf—very distinctive smell. Looks like it could be mint or watercress, but it's not."

"Never heard of it," he said. I left him standing there holding his wand. I could feel his gaze following me. He was alone in that cavernous supermarket with me, and I could have been anyone. A maniac maybe—searching for basil. I gave it up.

Back at the house, the party is now in full swing. Balloons hang from the front gate. The dogs have been locked in the garage, whining and claw-

JASON HOLLEY

ing desperately at the door. Why they crave human attention is beyond me. People are already milling around the lawn holding drinks, paper plates, and napkins out in front of them. You can tell right away which ones have developed a party technique for handling plates and drinks and which ones are awkward about it. A couple smile at me, but I don't recognize them. I sneak in the back door and wind my way through the loud crowd to the kitchen. "No basil!" I report to the women at large, who are now very busy with pies and bread.

"That's all right, we don't need it now," one of them says, and offers me a big wooden spoonful of green pasta sauce out of the blender.

"Tastes just like basil," I say.

"It *is* basil," one of them giggles.

"Oh, so you didn't need basil, then?"

"No, I guess not. We seem to have found some."

"Oh, good," I say. Now I start recognizing faces around me but can't put any names to them. Relatives of my wife. Country faces. Some of whom have even fewer social skills than myself. I feel a strange empathy with these weathered Northern men, with their huge knuckled hands and gentle ice-blue eyes. Even so, it makes it no easier to chat with them. There is a woman from New York who stands out from all the Midwesterners in her solid-black scary outfit with lace-up combat boots and shorn matching black hair. She has an anguished, perplexed look, as if she's done way too much time in psychotherapy. She's going on and on about how she got lost in her rental car trying to find her way out here from the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport. She seems to have a great appetite for engaging people in her smallest dilemmas and turning them into some huge dramatic deal.

Finally, I recognize a woman from Montana, a friend of my wife's sister, who I've always found fairly easy to talk to, mainly because she'll talk about anything that pops into her head, from Shakespeare to Christmas pudding. She finds everything "fascinating" and "wonderful." I veer toward her, hoping I can engage her before someone else does, and, sure enough, in less than a minute she is asking me about guns—not my favorite subject, but it beats Bush-bashing or Tiger Woods-fawning, which seem to be the two main topics in the room. She is concerned about a recent string of assaults on single women in the area of St. Paul she's just moved into and is wondering if maybe now is the time to consider carrying a side arm. I find it hard to believe that anyone could get assaulted in St. Paul, but what do I know? I never go into the cities. I try to discourage the woman from Montana from carrying a weapon at all, with the usual caution that it could be used against her. Instead, I recommend she pick up a .410 shotgun for household protection, just in case some idiot followed her home and busted down her door. "You can't miss with a .410," I tell her. "It's light. It's fast. And you can shoot from the hip." She smiles. She likes the Western connotation. She asks me if I own one and I tell her yes, but it's not for sale. She asks if she can see it so she at least knows what a .410 looks like. "Well, they're all down in the basement in a big shipping crate," I tell her. "I never unpacked them since we moved from Virginia."

"Oh, so you mean we can't see them, then?" she says, acting deeply disappointed. I'm surprised she could attach so much emotion to a .410 so quickly.

"No, we could go down there, I guess. I can see if I could dig them out."

"You could? That would be fantastic!" We head down to the basement, weaving through the kitchen, now packed with teen-age girls, friends of my daughter; polka-dot bandannas and Birkenstocks—very athletic, sunburned, take-no-shit-from-men type of girls. My daughter gives me a loving pat on the head as we go by. It reminds me I'm a father and at the same time makes me feel slightly childlike.

It's been five years since I even looked at the tall shipping crate where the shotguns and rifles are packed away. I stopped hunting after we moved here, mainly because in the Midwest it's illegal to hunt deer with a rifle and I find the idea of maiming one with a shotgun slug and having him drag off into the woods and slowly bleed to death the height of idiocy. I spot the crate in a dark, moldy corner behind the boiler and rummage around through the long, heavy barrels wrapped in padded butcher paper and sealed up with masking tape. The woman from Montana is right behind me, breathing heavily. "You can tell just by the feel of them which one is which?" she asks me.

"Yes, well, the .410 has a very skinny barrel, almost like a .22. Very light. Skinnier than a 20-gauge," I tell her.

"So you know every gun in there just by the feel of the barrel? That's incredible!" she says.

"Not really," I say. "Like, for instance, this one here—I know this is a .270 by the scope. See?" She reaches out and gingerly touches the bulge under the paper.

"Oh," she says. "I see. So the .410 doesn't have a scope, then? Is that the idea?"

"Right. The .410's a shotgun. A small shotgun. This is a rifle."

"Oh, so there's a difference between a shotgun and a rifle?" she says.

It suddenly feels like I've been duped. Upstairs the party is going full tilt and the kids have cranked up Moby on the speakers and there's a sudden thunderous cacophony of voices all speaking simultaneously and shrieking to be heard over the swelling music and something is so funny that it sounds as though somebody had just held up a cue card. What am I doing down here? Finally, I find the skinny .410 and strip the paper off it and hoist it out of the packing crate.

"Oh, it looks just like a toy gun!" she says, and backs away while I crack the slim single barrel and make sure it's empty. "Can I hold it?" she says.

"Sure," I say, and hand it over to her after I close the barrel with a snap. She holds it up to her shoulder so awkwardly that I wonder if she's ever been anywhere near Montana. She squints one eye very tightly, which is something you never have to do with a shotgun, and points the gun at the washing machine.

"Have you killed things with this?" she says, sort of wistfully.

"Yes. Yes, I have," I say.

"Really? What have you killed?" she says, and swings the barrel recklessly toward the water-heating tank.

"Varmints," I say. "Mostly varmints."

"Varmints? Really? What kind of varmints?" she says.

"Rats, birds, and snakes."

"Birds? Birds aren't varmints," she says, opening her eye. Her gaze seems out of focus.

"Starlings are," I say.

"Starlings?"

"Yeah, that's right. Starlings."

"But aren't they just innocent birds like you'd have in the yard or something?" she says. Now she's aiming the gun at the bare light bulbs in the ceiling and pretending to pull the trigger and making little explosion sounds. I find this very disturbing for some reason.

"No—starlings are horrible stinky birds," I say. "Don't you know about starlings? In Virginia, we used to have outbreaks of them."

"Outbreaks?" She giggles.

"Yes. That's right. Outbreaks. That's exactly what they were—starling outbreaks. They'd nest in the chimneys, and then hatch their babies in the spring. The babies would fly down into the bedroom and shit all over the rugs and curtains and the bedspread."

"Why would they fly down into the bedroom?" she asks, holding the stock of the shotgun tight up against her jaw.

"What?" I say.

"Why would the baby starlings fly down into the bedroom instead of flying up the chimney and out into the sky?"

"Because baby birds, when they hatch, usually fall before they fly. Haven't you noticed that up in Montana?"

"Where?" she says.

"Montana. Isn't that where you said you were from?"

"Oh, yeah—Montana. Right. But I never noticed baby birds falling up there."

"Maybe you weren't paying very close attention to the seasons," I say.

"So you had to actually shoot these little baby starlings in Virginia because they were falling into your bedroom and making a mess?"

"That's right."

"Couldn't you have just opened a window and let them fly out?"

"Starlings are very stupid birds," I tell her.

"They wouldn't fly out?"

"That's right. They'd crash into the window and then flop around on the floor, bleeding all over everything and twittering their heads off."

"Couldn't you just shoosh them out with a broom or something?"

"No. No, I couldn't just 'shoosh' them out with a broom."

"Why not?"

"Because I wanted to see them die! That's why not. I wanted to see them splattered against the Colonial wallpaper and the embroidered curtains. I wanted to see their little feathers flut-

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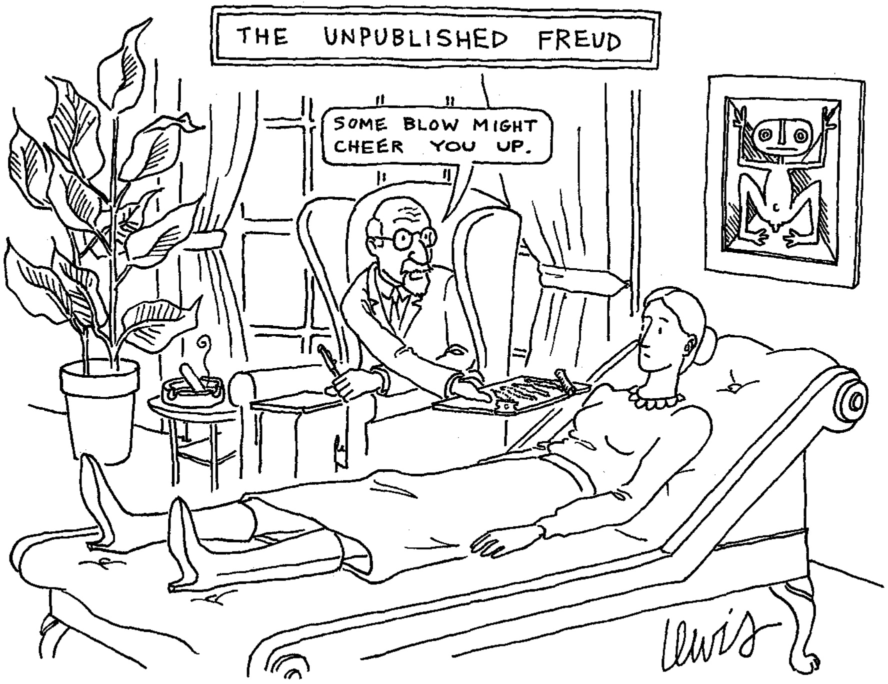

tering around through the dusty air of the Old Dominion."

"That's horrible!" she says. "You'd just shoot them?"

"Yes. I'd get drunk on red wine and lie in bed with that .410 across my lap and smoke Camels and I'd wait for them."

"Innocent baby birds?" She gives me some kind of Greenpeace stare, as though she can't believe she could have so misjudged me.

"Yeah. I'd lie there sometimes for hours, waiting and drinking Italian red wine, and I'd hear them making this god-awful tweetering sound up in the chimney, which meant their stupid mother had come to feed them. They'd get all frantic and shrieking like. And then finally one of them would fall down in the fireplace, thrashing around in the ashes."

"That's terrible," she says. "And you'd just lie there watching the poor little thing? And you wouldn't even try to help it?"

"Help it? I was there to kill it! Why would I want to help it?"

"Because—Because that's what people—That's what human beings are supposed to—" She gets so flustered she can't go on.

"I'd watch it whipping its naked wings around, trying to fly in circles through the ashes until it finally flopped out onto the rug. It'd lie there dazed for a while, gasping for air and looking all around with its ugly little yellow eye, wondering where in the hell it had fallen and what had happened to its cozy nest with all its little brothers and sisters and then, finally, it would have rested enough to prop itself up on its wobbly chicken-looking legs and fly straight up and come crashing straight down again."

"That's just awful! You're making this up," she says, and sets the .410 down on top of the washing machine and turns as though to go back to the party upstairs, but I'm blocking her way now.

"It would keep making these disastrous test flights like that, flying straight up and straight down until—"

"I don't really want to hear any more about this," she says, and tries to push past me.

"Until finally it would make one big explosive effort and hit the ceiling, then start thrashing, looking for something to hang on to, something to break its fall—and usually that was one of our curtains."

"Our?" she says. "Oh, so you were living with someone then? You weren't alone?" She seems almost relieved at the idea.

"I was alone," I say. "I was drinking Italian red wine and I was very much alone!"

"Oh," she says. "I think maybe I'll just go back upstairs and see if—" I make a quick move over to the washing machine and grab the gun. I crack the barrel open.

"What are you doing?" she says. I start going through the packing crate, looking for shells to fit the gun, talking the whole time, telling her the starling story in a very level narrator-type voice. A voice like Robert Stack.

"So I keep watching the dumb thing. I keep my eye on him. He's just sitting up there on the curtain rod breathing real hard, his heart thumping away. Just hanging onto the curtain for dear life. And I've had about two bottles of wine by now. Brunello di Montalcino. Aged in oak. Have you ever tried it?" I ask her.

"I don't drink wine," she says, and her face looks very grim and ashen. I finally find the green box of slim .410 shells and open it. I take one out and slip it into the open chamber, then snap the barrel shut.

"Well, I was unhappy back then, see. I was very unhappy, and drinking that stuff made me feel good. It didn't make me feel happy, it just made me feel all right about myself. You know what I mean? Does that make sense to you?" She nods. "It felt all right to be laid up way out in the deep country all by myself with a .410 across my lap, shit-face drunk, listening to cicadas, chain-smoking and shooting starlings off the curtains in my bedroom until three in the morning. I never could have predicted it, that's for sure. I never saw the situation coming. Just like this—just like this one right here."

"What do you mean?" she says.

"This. No way to predict this. That I'd be down here in the basement showing you a gun while there's a party going on upstairs, and talking about the past."

"I think I'll just go on back up and—" She gasps when I raise the gun up over her head and train it on a can of yellow tennis balls high up on the shelf behind her. She freezes and starts to tremble a little.

"I'm not going to shoot you," I say. She giggles and makes a little spitting sound.

"Well, I hope not!" she says. "Why would you want to shoot me?"

"I don't," I say. "I don't want to shoot you."

"Isn't this a little dangerous?"

"What?" I say, holding the .410 above her head, aimed right at the can of tennis balls.

"Pointing a loaded gun at somebody."

"I'm not pointing it at you. I'm pointing it at that can of balls."

"But it's in my direction," she says.

"No, it isn't. This is in your direction, see? Right here," and I lower the barrel so it's point-blank right in the middle of her breastbone. Now she screams. It's one of those extremely shrill horror-movie-type screams. The party goes silent upstairs. Not a voice can be heard. The music stops. You can't even hear the dogs whining anymore. The woman from Montana starts shaking her head, twitching it from side to side, and is now making a muffled squealing sound. "Stop twitching," I tell her, with the barrel of the gun still levelled at her chest. She stops. "You're not from Montana, are you? Tell the truth." She closes her eyes and squeezes them so hard that tiny tears burst out from the corners, looking more like sweat than tears. "Tell the truth!" She shakes her head. I start whispering to her for some reason. "I was very, very unhappy back then, when I was shooting starlings in my bedroom. Have you ever been very, very unhappy?" She nods vigorously. "What were you very, very unhappy about?" I ask her. She just shakes her head and keeps smothering her mouth with both hands. "I wasn't sure what it was, either," I say. "I never could quite put my finger on it. It's probably an unfair question, don't you think? To ask someone why they're very, very unhappy?" She nods frantically. My daughter's voice comes from the top of the basement staircase.

"Dad? Are you all right down there?"

"Yes," I say. "I'm fine." ◆

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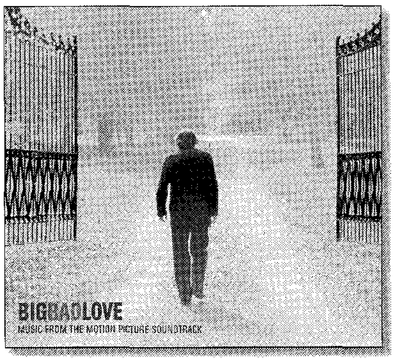

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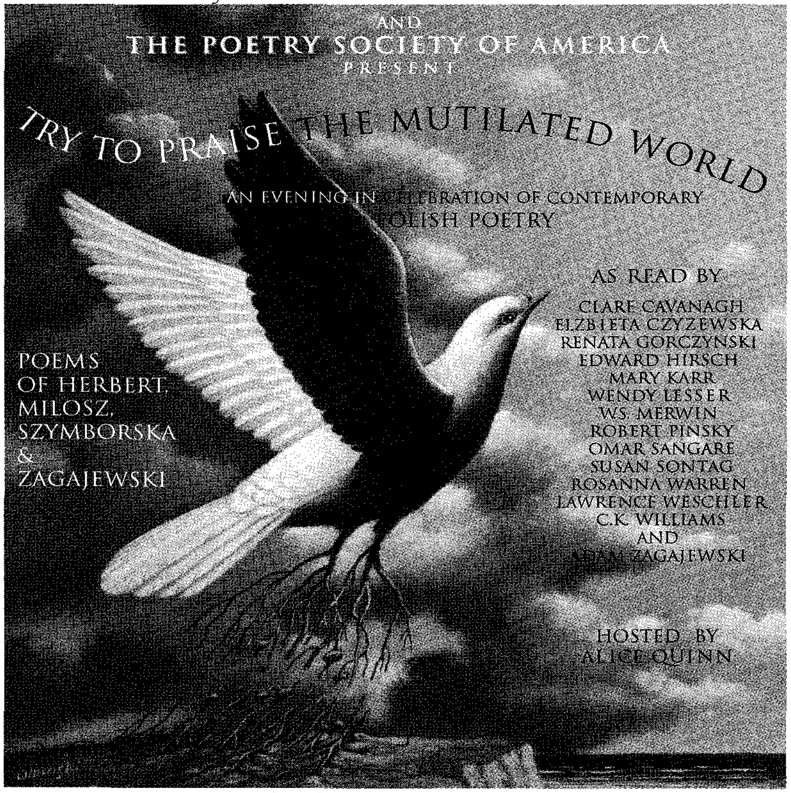
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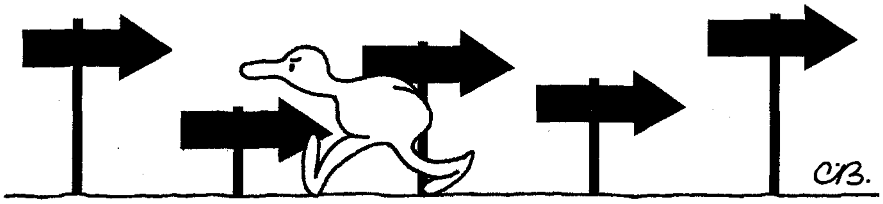


THE ART WORLD

WARHOL IN BLOOM

Putting the Pop artist in perspective.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

The Andy Warhol retrospective, which began in Berlin last year and has just opened at the Tate Modern, in London, demonstrates a number of interesting things. The first is that Warhol, fifteen years after his death, remains a contemporary; the revolution in taste that he set off in 1962, his year of miracles, rolls on. Second, we have reached a point at which it's possible to distinguish between what is good, bad, and O.K. in the Warhol opus. And, third, the Tate Modern, a renovated power plant that opened to ecstatic fanfare two years ago, is a scandalously lousy place for looking at art.

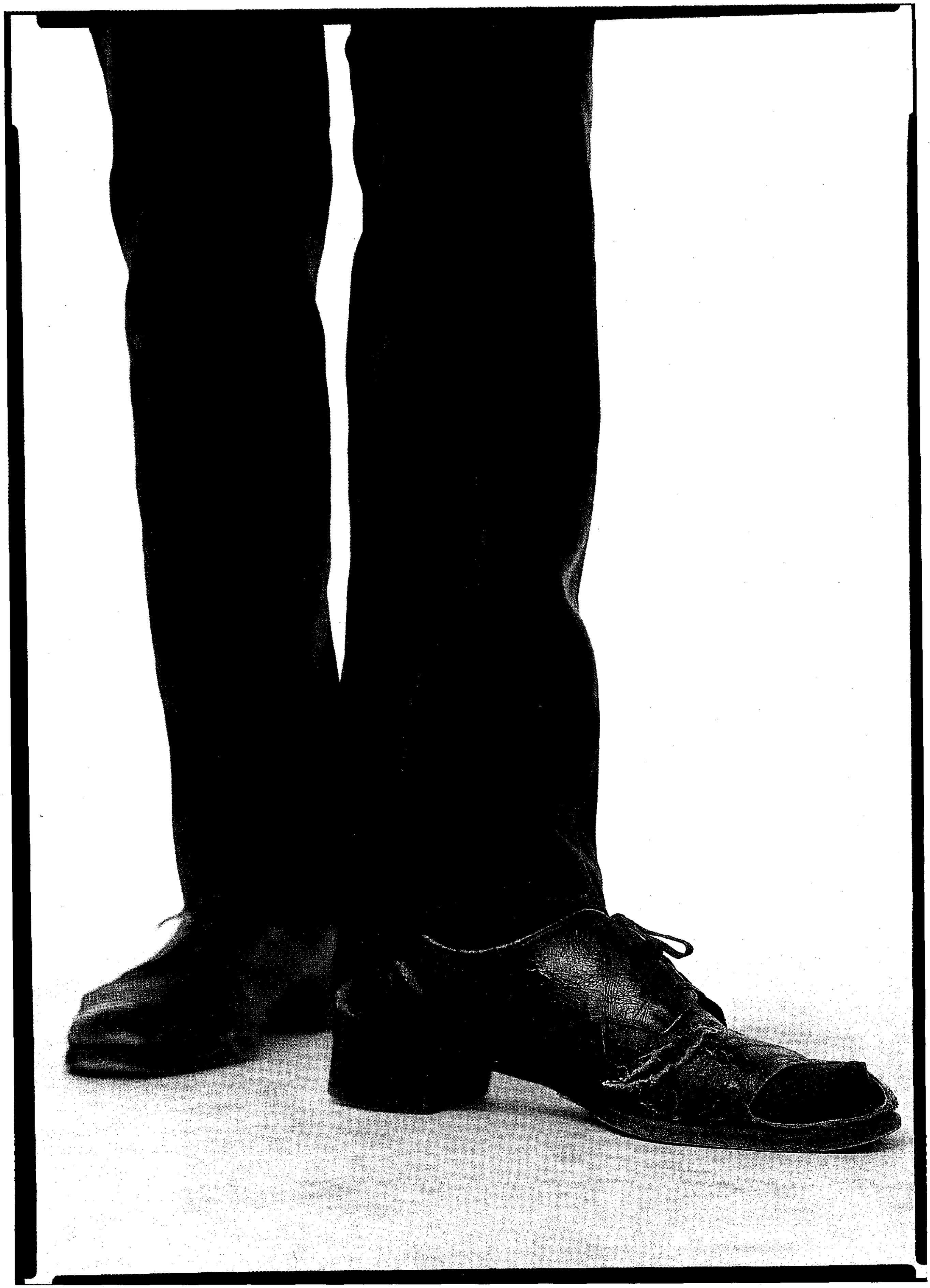
Not even the gorgeous Marilyns and Maos, lit with spotlights, can pierce the oppressiveness of the museum's galleries, which were designed by the Swiss firm of Herzog and de Meuron. The viewer's sensitivity is punished by ceilings that are too high, bunker-thick walls, dingy floors of concrete and unfinished wood, and uniform, rainy-weekend lighting. The building palpably yearns to be, if not a power plant again, something brawnier than the butterfly corral of an art space—perhaps a neo-medieval hospital or arsenal. The message of the place baffles. Surely, a hatred of art can't have been the architects' motive, though it would explain the effect. I put it down to institutional defensiveness, a puffed-up sense of dignity. (Imagine a Marx Brothers movie scripted by Margaret Dumont.) The museum's much deplored curatorial policy, which is evident in the hanging of its permanent collection, supports this suspicion. Forced thematic groupings of works, dominated by bossy wall texts, amount to grisly autopsies of modern art. But policy can change, as it does, ad hoc, in the sumptuous Warhol show, which was installed by the Tate curator Donna De Salvo. Buildings, on the other hand, are fate. What a pity for art and for England.

Announcing that pleasure will be the show's keynote, De Salvo begins with a group of "Flowers"—large silk-screen paintings from 1964 and 1967 that ring changes on a motif of flat hibiscus blossoms against a grainy ground of grass blades. (Warhol cribbed the image from a magazine.) The choice elated me, because a "Flowers" show in Paris, in 1965, was one of two experiences I had that year that inspired a vocational devotion to art. (The other was a Piero della Francesca fresco in Tuscany.) Warhol's "Flowers," which mounted winsome imagery on the stern chassis of the Abstract Expressionist big canvas, assimilated the most advanced principles of abstract painting into the larger culture. For many people, this act of levelling will always seem a barbaric assault on civilized values. They have a point, but I am incorrigibly thrilled by Warhol's joining of aesthetic sophistication with mass appeal. Like the Beatles—his nearest equivalent in another field—Warhol invested vernacular idioms with a timeless eloquence.

A spotty selection of early drawings, from Warhol's student days, in Pittsburgh, and his career as a New York advertising illustrator in the nineteen-fifties, show a boy insouciantly picking his nose. Their style is vaguely Weimar, like that of a sweeter George Grosz. The young artist plainly aspired to a decadence that was both sassy and divine—most blatantly in homoerotic drawings that he tricked out with imitation gold leaf. Warhol never drew very well. Drawing is thinking, and his forte was intuitive éclat, not thought. When he started painting from cheap newspaper ads and comic strips, in 1960, he capitalized on a look of slack, messy drawing, which proved perfect for the humble subject matter. In 1962, he suppressed evidence of the human hand in his painstakingly handmade paintings of Campbell's soup cans, and then replaced it with the incidental smudge and grit of coarse silk-screening. Meanwhile, he brought off a number of excellent jokes on high art—paintings derived from paint-by-numbers kits and minimalist sculptures that, upon first glance, are indistinguishable from Brillo boxes. Some conceptually minded critics deem those Dadaist coups Warhol's most important work, but I think they're bagatelles. In any case, Warhol was a great painter for long enough to matter.

Everyone knows that Warhol said he wanted to be a machine. Few recall him saying, as he also did, that he wanted to be Matisse. I think he split the difference between the two wishes, achieving pictorial art that is like a product of balky, breakdown-prone machinery and also like the fever dream of a Matissean odalisque, in thrall to "*luxe, calme et volupté*." Warhol was a supreme colorist who redid the world's palette in tart, amazing hues such as cerise, citron, burnt orange, and apple-green. His choice of subjects for his best work—sexy culture heroes and gruesome death scenes—had nothing to do with social commentary. It simply made efficient use of his childhood as a working-class sissy who had been weaned on movie magazines and tabloids.

Warhol's was a bottom-up view of America. Swiftly ascending to the upper crust in New York, he was never tainted by anything middlebrow. He loved both populist glam-



Warhol's view of America was from the bottom up. The artist in New York, in 1969. Photograph by Richard Avedon.

our and the delicious horror of death by Saturday-night car crash or the electric chair. A poor boy's fear of poverty and a devout Catholic's resistance to doubt made him at once greedy and serene. Add uncanny aesthetic sensitivity and social acuity, and you have a catalyst that, dropped into the art world's chemistry, stayed the same while altering everything.

How decisive a break with tradition did Warhol bring about? To travel back to art before 1962 is to enter another age. But his classic paintings of the early sixties remain wide open to the present, as do the painterly films he made in the same period. His twenty-four-hour film "Empire" (1964), which consists of a single static shot of the Empire State Building, is video-projected in the show to mesmerizing effect. Today, computer technology, which brings photography under paintinglike control, spurs new approaches to the formal and poetic mysteries of pictorial experience. One sign of the times is the current celebration of the German painter Gerhard Richter, at the Museum of Modern Art. Richter's œuvre may be seen, with some distortion, as a long, complex extrapolation from Warhol. Another bellwether is David Hockney's fashionable speculation that the Old Masters secretly relied on optical devices; whatever the merits of this hypothesis, it reflects an increasing readiness to reconsider painting within a spectrum of overlapping visual crafts. Warhol's serial silk-screening of the "Mona Lisa" (the 1963 picture is entitled "Thirty Are Better Than One") might serve as an emblem for the delirious self-consciousness of so much recent art. I don't much like the work, which is one of the few occasions when Warhol went for laughs; his better paintings, in which pure aesthetic sensation transcends subject matter, are too particular to be taken as specimens of anything other than themselves.

In 1965, Warhol declared that he was through with painting, and, in a real sense, he was. Uncharacteristically infected with hubris, he bade farewell to the art world with a quintessentially nineteen-sixties show of shocking-pink and chartreuse cow wallpaper and drifting Mylar balloons. I recall the opening, at which the stoned mood was a kind of exquisite stupidity. (The Tate has recreated the event on a larger scale, to the glee of children, who noisily take their museum fatigue out on the balloons.) Warhol expected to storm Hollywood with his filmmaking. Hollywood demurred. His later painting hit a few high points: the totalitarian sublime of his Mao pictures; the vivacity of his still underrated portraiture of celebrities (Mick, Liza, Liz) and paying, would-be celebrities; and the raving spookiness of his self-portraits, with their flyaway hair, which he did the year before his untimely death following a routine surgery in 1987. But, increasingly, painting became a sideline to his business ventures, of which his magazine, *Interview*, has the most to answer for as a template of bubble-brained celebrity journalism. The show ends with striking installations of his later works—vast camouflage patterns, monumental Rorschach blots, gloomy "Shadows," sparkling with diamond dust, rusty spatters of urine on copper emulsion, and silk screens of da Vinci's "Last Supper," as well as zesty collaborations with Jean-Michel Basquiat. But these pieces strike me more as ingenious ideas for painting than as satisfying works of art. They feel phoned in.

Some people trace Warhol's decline as an artist to the attempt on his life by a disgruntled feminist, in 1968, an event that ended the fertile anarchy of his Factory scene. But the process was already under way as a toxic by-product of his phenomenal success. The culture that Warhol manipulated was becoming saturated with his own influence, contaminating the outsider's initiative that had made his best works so surprising. The great Marilyns and Elvises of the sixties—Elvis in black and silver, solemnly playing a cheesy role as a Western gunfighter—exploded in the initial nanoseconds of a big bang, a convulsion of the world by industrialized popular culture that is still with us. Warhol froze that shock in images of Byzantine poise and force. Art's noble past and uncertain future still meet in his frayed, beautiful, hieratic surfaces, which hark back to ancient idolatries and anticipate who knows what. We have not yet come to terms with these paintings, which refuse to settle down as examples of a period's style. They are as raw, irritating, and urgent as ever. ♦

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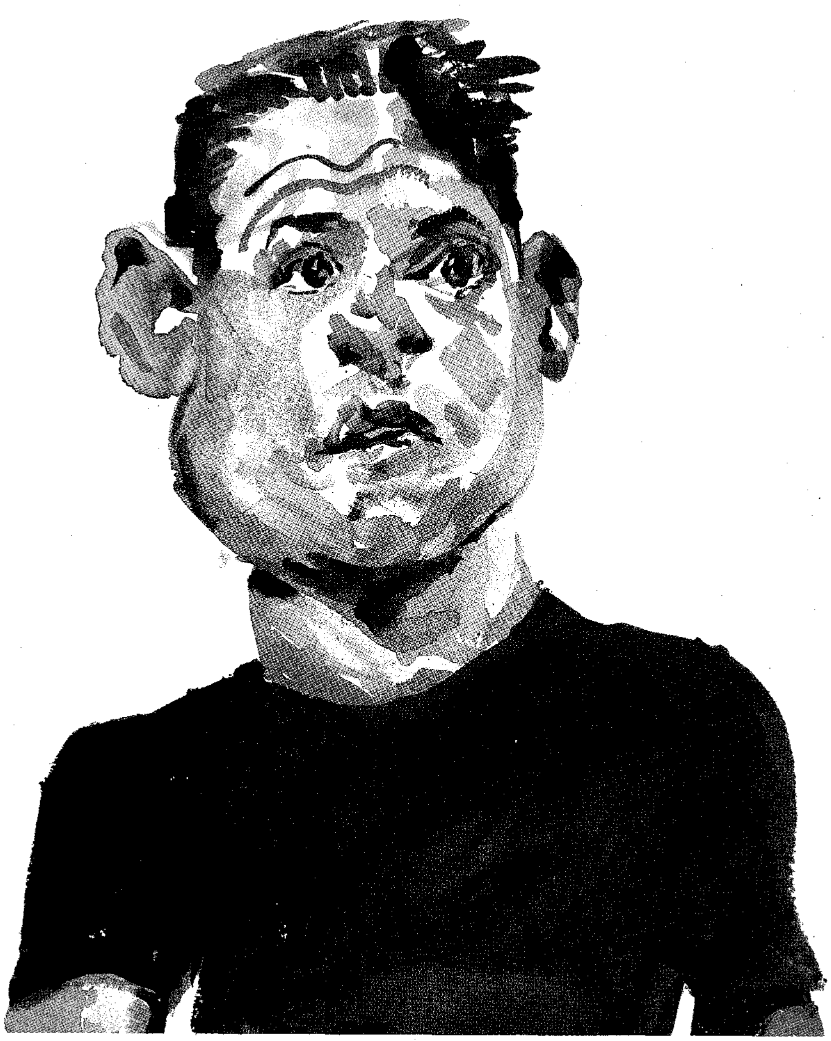
BOOKS

CAN YOU FORGIVE HIM?

A right-wing conspirator comes clean.

BY HENDRIK HERTZBERG

If a tale of political migration is to have any real punch, it needs a touch of passionate intensity—and, as Yeats pointed out, that's what the worst are full of. The journey from moderate liberalism to moderate conservatism or vice versa is the stuff of watery op-ed pieces and policy monographs, but it doesn't provide much in the way of narrative drive. A cracking good story requires something stronger at one end or the other, or both. Stalinism supplied that something stronger a half century ago. Its apostates moved by definition from left to right, though many of them stopped well short of the opposite pole of the spectrum. Of the six contributors to "The God That Failed," for example, five (Richard Wright, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, André Gide, and Louis Fischer) ended up on the moderate left, and one (Arthur Koestler) turned away from politics. For these writers, the break was with political extremism itself as much as with its Stalinist manifestation. Other ex-Communists—one thinks of Whittaker Chambers and a multitude of lesser lights—took refuge in belief systems almost as Manichaean and doctrinaire as the one they abandoned.



PHILIP BURKE

Conservatives lionized young David Brock as their very own Bob Woodward.

The tradition of the left-to-right confessional has continued with writers like Norman Podhoretz, who led the neoconservative parade from standard liberalism to showy, confrontational anti-liberalism, and David Horowitz, who traded sixties-style infantile leftist anger for eighties-style infantile rightist anger. The political space such people inhabit has become, now that Communism and its Third World offshoots are in apparently permanent eclipse, the principal site of all-encompassing ideological certainty. Partly as a result, there has been a bit of a drift—not quite a trend—in the other direction. It began quietly, when Garry Wills, along with a few other Catholic intellectuals, made the long march from *National Review* to *The New York Review of Books*. A younger writer, Michael Lind, has chronicled his conversion from neoconservatism to a kind of neo-New Deal politics he calls liberal nationalism. Now comes David Brock.

The texture of Brock's flight from the right was not at all like that of Wills or Lind. Their defection was the product of intellectual reflection; Brock's was the result of harrowing experience. What drove Brock was the wrongness of what he did, not of what he thought. As a frontline machine gunner in the Washington scandal wars of the nineteen-nineties, Brock inflicted heavy political casualties. But his own wounds came mostly from friendly fire, and many of these, he eventually realized, were self-inflicted. "Blinded by the Right: The Conscience of an Ex-Conservative" (Crown; $25.95) is the story of a change of heart, not of mind. It is also an astounding account of fin-de-siècle Washington politics. And it is an entertaining backstage sketchbook of scores of eccentric and mostly obnoxious characters, many of whom will be familiar to regular viewers of the cable news-chat channels.

For a man not yet forty, Brock has had quite a career. As a student at the Berkeley campus of the University of California in the early nineteen-eighties, he had two arrows in his quiver. He was a crackerjack reporter for the *Daily Californian*, the student paper, where his scoops included an investigation of financial chicanery which forced the resignation of a university vice-president. And he was a budding controversialist, whose

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rebellion against what was not yet called political correctness began when he covered a lecture by Jeane Kirkpatrick, President Reagan's United Nations Ambassador, and saw her shouted down and silenced by a howling mob. Young Brock had worshipped Bobby Kennedy, voted for Jimmy Carter, and spent the summer after his freshman year working for one of Ralph Nader's organizations; after the Kirkpatrick episode, he started reading back issues of *Commentary*, sought out the few conservative professors on campus, and wrote opinion columns for the *Daily Cal* which gleefully defied the prevailing left-wing orthodoxy. (One of them, a defense of the invasion of Grenada, prompted a demonstration against him personally.) Still, his ambition was to be a journalist, not a polemicist, and in 1985 he landed a news internship at the *Wall Street Journal*.

Brock's sojourn in New York went well, and in the normal course of events the *Journal* would have offered him a permanent position. Perhaps he would still be a member of the staff of reporters and correspondents which makes that paper (excepting its editorial and op-ed pages) a paragon of American journalism. At the time, though, a temporary hiring freeze was in effect at the *Journal*. For want of that particular nail, a horseshoe was lost, and then a great thundering herd of steeds, and then, very nearly, a kingdom—or its American equivalent, a Presidency.

Brock settled for his second choice, a writing job at *Insight*, a weekly "news magazine" published under the auspices of the Washington *Times*, the jewel in the crown of the media satrapy owned by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, the Korean messiah, and his Unification Church. At *Insight*, then at the Heritage Foundation, and, finally, at the monthly *American Spectator*, Brock became part of Washington's smart set of young and extremely conservative publicists, political operatives, lawyers, congressional staffers, and commentators. He soon eclipsed them all.

In 1992, Brock wrote a long article for *The American Spectator* portraying Anita Hill, the demure law professor whose testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee had nearly derailed the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, as a deranged liar manipulated by scheming feminist harridans. The article became a sensation when Rush Limbaugh read portions of it aloud on his radio program; the *Spectator's* circulation quickly shot from thirty thousand to well over a hundred thousand. In the book version of "The Real Anita Hill," Brock adopted a more judicious tone. (He dropped the article's most notorious line, in which he had described Hill as "a bit nutty, and a bit slutty.") The grandees of respectable conservatism—George F. Will, William F. Buckley, Jr., the *Journal's* editorial page—embraced "The Real Anita Hill." It got a favorable review from Christopher Lehmann-Haupt in the New York *Times*, and it zoomed up the *Times* best-seller list. Brock, at thirty, was suddenly the most famous young conservative writer in the country, a glamorous, swashbuckling "investigative reporter," the Bob Woodward of the right.

There was more—much more—to come. For his next big story, Brock took aim at the conservative movement's most hated, and most successful, nemesis: the new President of the United States, Bill Clinton. The resulting article, "His Cheatin' Heart"—eleven thousand words of sexual gossip retailed to Brock by Arkansas state troopers who had served on Clinton's gubernatorial bodyguard detail—was mainlined, pre-publication, into the media bloodstream via a well-managed leak to CNN. The *Spectator's* circulation again soared, to three hundred thousand. Eventually, almost everything in the story would end up discredited. But that didn't stop it from creating an indelible image of Clinton. A few of its allegations—such as a (bogus) tale that the President had offered jobs to troopers in exchange for silence—were serious. The rest were trivial, such as an anecdote about a woman who had purportedly been summoned to Clinton's hotel room and left an hour later, supposedly remarking to a trooper that she was available to be the Governor's "regular girlfriend." (Brock thought so little of this morsel of sleaze that he didn't bother to ask his source the woman's surname. He referred to her only as Paula.)

Brock now cut a bigger swath than ever in Washington's right-wing social circles and among the Limbaugh-listening masses. For his next book project, a promised hatchet job on Hillary Clinton, he got a million-dollar advance. But when the book came out, shortly before the 1996 election, it wasn't quite what his friends or his publishers had anticipated. "The Seduction of Hillary Rodham" was harsh in its depiction of Hillary's husband, and it took for granted the conservative critique of her politics as big-government, Hillary-knows-best radicalism. Even so, it was a real biography, well researched and mostly accurate, and it concluded, shockingly, that in spite of all her machinations and lawyerly evasions Mrs. Clinton was basically a well-intentioned, possibly even a decent, person.

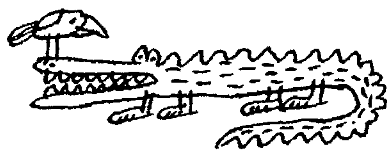
As a result, Brock found himself ostracized by most of his suddenly former friends and disinvited to the sort of parties at which he had formerly preened. His second thoughts, which had been quietly taking shape for some time, were accelerated by two other factors. Brock is gay, a circumstance that was making him increasingly unhappy in a political movement too often allied with homophobic bigotry—a movement, moreover, that had made him a star precisely because of his prowess as a sexual prosecutor. And, as the orchestrated scandal-mongering that dominated Clinton's second term approached its apogee, Brock began to feel guilty. The perjury trap that led to Clinton's impeachment, after all, was sprung during a deposition in a lawsuit that stemmed directly from Brock's "troopergate" article. Publicly and privately, step by step, Brock repudiated his former comrades, his former views, and the substance of most of the work that had made him famous. And he sat down to write another book.

Brock and the circle of young conservatives he joined when he came to Washington in 1986 called themselves the Third Generation. ("Barry Goldwater made the G.O.P. a conservative party; Ronald Reagan made it a winning electoral majority; now it was our turn.") They talked incessantly about "the battle of ideas," but ideas per se didn't much interest them. The catechism—cutting taxes on the rich, getting rid of regulations, and spending on defense are good; programs that redistribute income and provide services to the underprivileged are bad—required no revision. All that was required was to vanquish the enemy.

"Blinded by the Right" shows how deeply the conservatism of the past fifteen years or so was and is—to use an old term of abuse not much heard nowadays—reactionary. For most of the nineteen-eighties, anti-Communism and laissez-faire economics held the conservative movement together, and Reagan's sunny personality gave it a more or less genial face. When the Cold War faded and Reagan was replaced by the first George Bush—who ran for President on hard-right themes but governed as what the conservatives called a "squish," thereby earning their scornful indifference—the movement, leaderless but disciplined and well organized, was left to its own devices.

The enemy was "the other team": liberals, Democrats, environmentalists, peaceniks, victim-group whiners (black, gay, female, poor), civil-liberties bores, and anyone who stood for such sixties countercultural values as, in Brock's summary, "abortion rights, gay rights, feminism, liberal judges, pornography, multiculturalism, affirmative action, and sex education in schools." For Brock, some of this entailed a certain cognitive dissonance. Openly gay at Berkeley, he had retreated behind the closet door when he got to Washington; but he continued to hold, if not to express, tolerant views on the "social issues." Nevertheless, he saw the earnest Democrats and liberal lobbyists of Washington, none of whom he actually knew, as extensions of the smug left-wing bullies he had encountered at Berkeley. The enemy's perfidy was something everyone—Christian rightists, secular neoconservatives, conservative populists, and young militants fresh from the anti-P.C. wars on campus—could agree on. "The lefties, the takers, the coercive utopians," as Grover Norquist, an excitable conservative impresario, would later put it on the eve of the second President Bush's Inauguration, "are not stupid. They are evil. *Evil!*"

Brock had flair and talent. He knew how to do what looked like investigative journalism, and he valued the credibility that his Anita Hill book had earned him. His success with the troopergate story inspired something called the Arkansas Project, financed by two and a half million dollars provided by the Pittsburgh-



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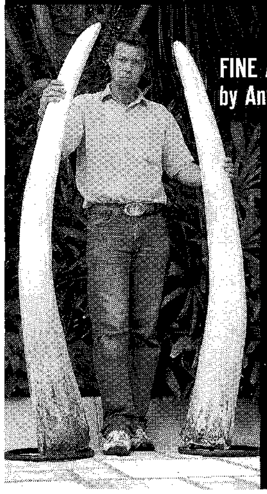

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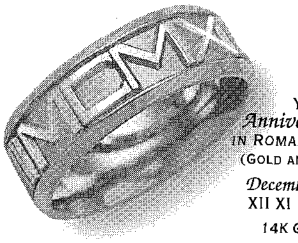

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based billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife. Its goal was to produce evidence that Bill and Hillary Clinton were sexual, financial, violence-prone criminals. The Arkansas Project's money was funnelled through *The American Spectator* to a variety of unsavory characters, racist Clinton-haters, and self-described private detectives in Arkansas. One of its investigations, a particular obsession of Scaife's, was of the Vincent Foster case. Foster, a Clinton family friend and a former Little Rock law partner of Hillary Clinton's, was a deputy White House counsel. In July of 1993, after being attacked in a series of *Wall Street Journal* editorials, Foster shot himself to death in a park outside Washington. Some on the right believed, or professed to believe, that he had been murdered by or at the behest of the Clintons, who were orchestrating a monstrous coverup. R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., the editor of *The American Spectator*, assigned the story to a gullible British journalist named Ambrose Evans-Pritchard. What Evans-Pritchard turned in was so shoddy, Brock writes, that he, Tyrrell's executive editor Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, and Ronald Burr, the magazine's publisher, agreed that it had to be stopped despite Tyrrell's determination to publish it. For help, Brock turned to Ted Olson, an informal but influential adviser to the *Spectator*. Olson had been Reagan's private lawyer; he was a sachem of the Federalist Society, an association of conservative lawyers and jurists whose membership included future Justices of the Supreme Court; and he was a close friend and former law partner of Kenneth Starr's. Olson, Brock thought, was "the model of a sober, careful lawyer with impeccable judgment." Brock faxed him the piece. Olson's response was evidently not what he was expecting. Olson, Brock writes, "told me bluntly, in a tone of voice that I had never heard him use before, that while he believed, as Starr apparently did, that Foster had committed suicide, raising questions about the death was a way of turning up the heat on the administration until another scandal was shaken loose, which was the *Spectator's* mission. The statement stunned me. Though I was all for harassing the administration, I was not ready to accept the reality that the *Spectator* was a propaganda organ." (The piece ran; the *Spectator's* reputation, such as it was, was unaffected.)

The anecdote, like many that Brock tells, has elements of farce. But it also has a sinister side, and not only because Olson is now Solicitor General of the United States. Indeed, the milieu that Brock describes is reminiscent of that of American Communism in the nineteen-thirties and forties. Obviously, organized American conservatism offers no moral equivalents of what the Communist Party U.S.A. and its front groups made it their business to defend or deny: totalitarianism, the Gulag, the tens of millions of murders committed by the Stalin regime. But the social and structural affinities are striking, and Brock himself touches here and there on some of their more obvious manifestations. (He notes a portrait of Lenin that Grover Norquist displayed on his wall as a symbol of ruthless commitment, and he remarks on the fact that some of his erstwhile comrades, such as Horowitz, made the transition from far left to far right without the slightest alteration in political style or temperament.) Like the American and other Western Communist parties in their heyday, the American conservative movement has created a kind of alternative intellectual and political universe—a set of institutions parallel to and modelled on the institutions of mainstream society (many of which the movement sees, or imagines, as the organs of a disciplined Liberal Establishment) and dedicated to the single purpose of advancing a predetermined political agenda. There is a kind of Inner Movement, consisting of a few hundred funders, senior organization leaders, lawyers, and prominent media personalities (but only a handful of practicing politicians), and an Outer Movement, consisting of a few thousand staff people, grunt workers, and lower-level operatives of one kind or another. The movement has its own newspapers (the Washington *Times*, the New York *Post*, the *Journal's* editorial page), its own magazines (*The Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, *Policy Review*, *Commentary*, and many more), its own broadcasting operations (Fox News and an array of national and local talk-radio programs and right-wing Christian broadcast outlets), its own publishing houses (Regnery and the Free Press, among others), its own quasi-academic research institutions (the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute), and even its own Popular Front—the Republican Party, important elements of which (the party's congressional and judicial leadership, for example) it has successfully commandeered. These closely linked organizations (the vanguard of the conservative revolution, you might say) compose an entire social world with its own rituals, celebrations, and anniversaries, within which it is possible to live one's entire life. It is a world with its own elaborate system of incentives and sanctions, through which—as Brock discovered—energetic conformity is rewarded with honors and promotions while deviations from the movement line, depending on their seriousness, are punished with anything from mild social disapproval to outright excommunication.

Another echo was the conviction that the mainstream media—the conservative movement called it the "liberal," not the "capitalist," press, but the air of beleaguerment and conspiracy was the same—was little more than an engine of propaganda. Brock saw himself as an engagé journalist, presenting the "other side," willing to shape and select facts in support of an argument but not to make them up. As long as he had a "source," he had no compunctions about reporting things he did not know to be true, but he thought of himself as drawing the line at reporting things he knew to be false. He therefore experienced an epiphany in 1994, when he set out to demolish a competing account of the same events, "Strange Justice," by two *Wall Street Journal* reporters, Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, who, as it happens, had unfavorably reviewed "The Real Anita Hill" the year before. (Their review appeared in this magazine, where Mayer is now a staff writer; Abramson is now the Washington bureau chief of the *Times*.) Brock and Clarence Thomas's other supporters had portrayed him as having a prudish distaste for pornography; Mayer and Abramson reported that, on the contrary, he was a habitual renter of hard-core videotapes. While looking for a way to refute this, Brock concluded that it was true. Nevertheless, in his review he wrote that there was no evidence—none—"that Thomas had ever rented even one pornographic video, let alone that he was a 'habitual' consumer of pornography."

"When I wrote those words, I knew they were false," Brock writes in "Blinded by the Right." He adds, "Perhaps the errors of 'The Real Anita Hill' could be attributed to journalistic carelessness, ideological bias, and my misdirected quest for acceptance from a political movement. In the review of 'Strange Justice,' however, to protect myself and my tribe from the truth and consequences of our own hypocrisy, smears, falsehoods, and cover-ups, I consciously and actively chose an unethical path. I continued to malign Anita Hill and her liberal supporters as liars. I trashed the professional reputations of two journalists for reporting something I knew was correct."

The video-store lie was small, but it was where Brock now understands that he touched bottom. It took him several more years to feel his way up through the dark, noxious mass he had done so much to create. His work on the Hillary Clinton book helped him find his moral bearings. In 1996, he debunked a concoction of Clinton-hating fantasies, "Unlimited Access," whose author, a former F.B.I. agent named Gary Aldrich, had used Brock as the source for one of his more outlandish claims. In 1997, in an article for *Esquire*, "Confessions of a Right-Wing Hit Man," he broke publicly with the movement, and, though he was still reflexively defending the accuracy of his Anita Hill and troopergate reporting, got fired by the *Spectator*. (The magazine has since faded into oblivion.) Later that year and throughout 1998, he exhaustively briefed anyone who cared to ask—including members of the team defending President Clinton against impeachment—on everything he knew about the Arkansas Project. In 2000, he voted for Al Gore.

This book completes Brock's project of purgation. Though he sometimes describes himself in the language of therapy (he writes of "filling my tortured need for friendship and affection and acceptance," etc.), the words he more often uses—words like "greed," "cowardice," "opportunism," "careerism," and "narcissism"—are not exactly drawn from the lexicon of moral relativism. "Blinded by the Right" is a valuable book. It is not an apologia. It is something rarer, and it is something that is owed not only from its author but also from the political cadre he has so spectacularly served and forsaken: an apology. ♦

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THE THEATRE

WAR STORIES

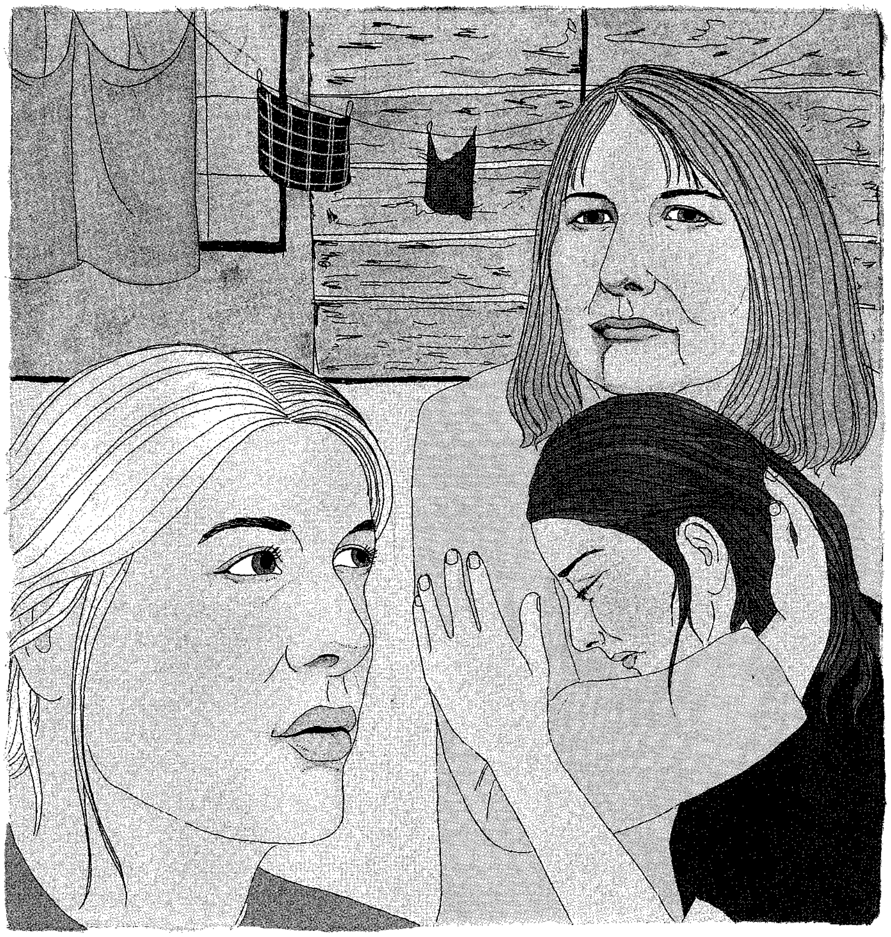
Revisiting the ruins of Bosnia.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

"Eve Ensler Wants to Save the World," a recent *Times Magazine* article on the playwright and activist declared in its title, before going on to disparage her for, among other things, having been moved to tears by telling the story of a Bosnian rape victim during a recent benefit performance of "The Vagina Monologues." Ensler's 1996 show took private parts public in rather spectacular fashion, and has become a well-documented worldwide phenomenon. The paperback of the script is in its twenty-second printing; HBO aired a filmed version a few weeks ago; and such is the extent of the show's penetration into the culture that at any given moment someone somewhere is sitting on a stool on a stage and saying, "My vagina's angry. It is. It's pissed off. My vagina's furious and it needs to talk." I am not among those who have been galvanized by "The Vagina Monologues." I saw Ensler perform it five years ago, and I found a lot of it cutesy-wootsy, such as the bit where she recited women's answers to the question "If your vagina got dressed, what would it wear?" (mine would wear earplugs, so it wouldn't have to listen to such dopey lines of inquiry), and I found some of it moving, such as the story of the woman who had had a sexual experience in 1953 that was so humiliating she never regained the ability to enjoy her body, and I found little of it revelatory. Much of what I heard seemed vaguely unreal—that is, overly mystico-poetical, and not true to the way people really speak. (Ensler writes in the book version that some of the interviews are "close" to verbatim, some are composites, and "with some I just began with the seed of an interview and had a good time.") But "The Vagina Monologues" has had a liberating effect on many people, and it has, over the years, gathered a force that I can only admire; in addition to doing well, it has done good in the world—it has become the powerful fulcrum of a fund-raising effort aimed at ending violence against women (by 2005, Ensler hopes), and the organization that Ensler started a few years ago with that goal in mind has already raised millions of dollars.

It's a tough act to follow, but Ensler's latest play, "Necessary Targets" (at the Variety Arts), which is set in 1995 in a Bosnian refugee camp, is in a way a continuation of some of the concerns expressed in "The Vagina Monologues." It had its origins in a trip the author took to Croatia and Pakistan in 1993 to meet with refugees, which was inspired by a photograph that she saw on the front page of *Newsday*. The photograph showed a group of young women who had just returned home from a rape camp in Bosnia. Their faces—"beautiful and young and destroyed"—had such an effect on her, that, as she writes in "The Vagina Monologues" (the story of the Bosnian rape victim in that play comes out of the same trip), "I knew I had to go there. I had to meet these women."

You might not expect a crusader like Ensler to have a nuanced sense of what it means to go to a foreign country and tread lightly, as an outsider who didn't live through the horrors of the war, but she has enough self-awareness to have created two characters in "Necessary Targets" who constitute a kind of debate about the virtues of plunging in over your head. One is a middle-aged New York psychiatrist named Dr. Stephens (Shirley Knight)—or J.S., as she is called—who, although she feels "much safer with eating disorders," has come to the camp for ten days, at the behest of a Presidential commission, to talk to the women about what they've been through. The other is a young trauma counsellor named Melissa (Catherine



Catherine Kellner and Shirley Knight air their differences in "Necessary Targets."

LARA TOMLIN

Kellner), who has worked in Haiti and Rwanda; she is matter-of-fact about the hardships of war and its aftermath, and critical of J.S.'s discomfort with the rough conditions of the camp. There is, of course, tension between the two women. As J.S., who has arrived wearing inappropriately elegant clothes and shoes, unpacks her suitcase, taking out hand wipes and little bottles of Evian water, Melissa notes that all her clothes, even her socks, are wrapped in tissue paper. "God, who packed your bags, Bendel's?" she says. The building where J.S. and Melissa are to live and work is a wreck; the ceiling is full of holes, and there's dirt everywhere, but Melissa is at home here. "I'm not big on comfort," she says. "It tends to terrorize me." J.S. is meant to be slightly ridiculous—she is under the impression that people in Bosnia speak Bosnian, she doesn't seem to have prepared herself on any level for this assignment, and her first order of business after unpacking is to file a fingernail—but our sympathy inclines in her direction, because Knight brings her to life so well. She is awkward and fluttery, and through her rigidity you sense that she's ripe for transformation. J.S. does try to connect with the opaque Melissa, even reaching across the generations to mirror the younger woman's style of speech. When Melissa says that she is "so not" married, the dignified J.S., after a brief pause to take in this lingo, responds that she is "so not as well."

J.S. is undone by the demands of the situation, and then is remade by what those demands bring out in her. She is at first unbending—painfully so, for her and for the audience. When one of the women, Seada (Mirjana Jokovic), comes to J.S. carrying her swaddled baby and wants to snuggle for warmth, she reacts with stiff reserve. Seada is urgently concerned about her baby, and at the same time appears to be disconnected from reality—she seems to think that J.S. is her mother—though we don't know the precise reason for her delusional state. Most of the women initially find the idea of talking to a shrink laughable, and it takes a while for their masks to fall—for us to realize that Azra (Sally Parrish), an old woman from a rural village, is focussed on the loss of her cow because she cannot face thinking about what happened to her family, and to see that Nuna (Maria Thayer), a teen-ager who talks about shopping and Disney World, is trying to cope with the fact that her mixed ethnic background makes her and her family "enemies everywhere." As the Bosnian women's stories unfold, J.S. unfolds, too, while Melissa reveals herself to be, as the sardonic Zlata (Diane Venora) says, a "story vulture"—she's writing a book about war victims, it turns out, and wants to tape the women. When J.S. insists that they need to feel safe in order to talk, Melissa argues that the tape recorder "legitimizes their experience," and that she and J.S. are there to "provoke, release. Move in. Move out."

There is humor and empathy in "Necessary Targets"—humor that a writer who had not been to Bosnia five times, as Ensler has, might not dare to attempt—but the play proceeds somewhat predictably. Melissa remains one-dimensional, her essential hardness standing in for all coldhearted journalists who are interested only in the story, and not in the people telling it. And, when we hear the sexy Jelena (Alyssa Bresnahan) rhapsodizing about the pleasure her husband used to take in sleeping with her before he was broken by war, we can easily guess how he will lash out in his woundedness. When we find out that J.S.'s father was a musician who had wanted a boy and called her J.S., after Bach, and that she wanted to be a great singer but stopped singing when she realized that she wasn't going to be great, we know that sooner or later, in the course of the play, J.S. will start singing again. But Knight's performance, under the direction of Michael Wilson, cuts through the predictability, and you can feel the effort it takes her to let go, as she gets hung up on the first word of a lullaby and struggles to find her voice.

In the introduction to the published version of "Necessary Targets" (which is not identical to the version produced at the Variety Arts), Ensler writes, "When we think of war, we think of it as something that happens to men in fields or jungles. We think of hand grenades and Scud missiles. . . . As long as there are snipers outside of Sarajevo, Sarajevo exists. But after the bombing, after the snipers, that's when the real war begins." Ensler didn't discover this truth, but, in bearing witness to Bosnian women's suffering and loss, she brings it home. ♦

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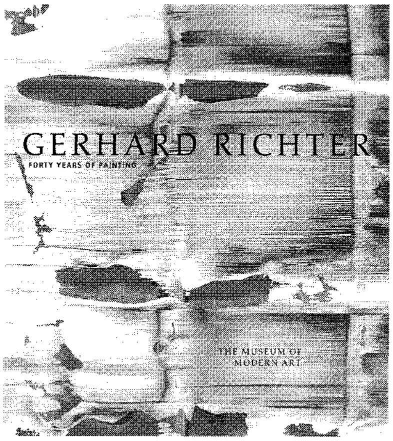

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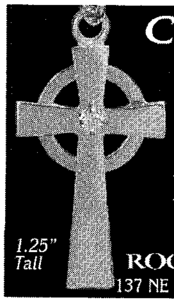

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GOOD GUYS

"We Were Soldiers" and "40 Days and 40 Nights."

BY DAVID DENBY

"We Were Soldiers," the new Mel Gibson movie, takes the Vietnam War away from the reporters, novelists, and film directors who have long portrayed it as a uniquely strange and alienating experience. In this version, Vietnam is no longer America's "rock-and-roll war" fought in the jungle by hallucinating hipsters and dazed rednecks, by big-city blacks and racists who wanted to kill "gooks." "We Were Soldiers" turns the war over to the white males who were simply brave—the kind of Americans who loved their God, revered their wives, and honored the Asian enemy. The movie is a piece of hero worship devoted to a commander who embodies these virtues—Lieutenant Colonel Harold G. (Hal) Moore, who led the 1st Battalion of the Army's Seventh Cavalry in the bloody battle of Ia Drang, in the central highlands, in late 1965. "We'll be landing under fire," he tells his troops during training at Fort Benning. "Men will die." He's certainly right about that. Hal Moore is the type of implacable warrior who stands in the middle of the fight, refusing to leave the field until everyone is either dead or safely removed. "We Were Soldiers," which is based on a book that Moore wrote with Joseph L. Galloway, a U.P.I. reporter at the time of the war, takes its tone from Moore's temperament—tough-minded, pious, and as square as a headstone. Some of it is stirring, but it's not a very interesting or original piece of work. Randall Wallace, who wrote and directed the movie, never quite deals with the war that he hopes to redeem.

Obsessed with such massacres as Custer's Last Stand and the various French humiliations in Indochina, Moore helped develop, as a way of avoiding entrapment, the air-cavalry strategy—drop in by helicopter, do your damage, and then get out fast. Early in the war, four hundred and fifty Americans, many of them under Moore's command, were thrown into a battle against two thousand regulars of the North Vietnamese Army in the Ia Drang Valley. The two sides were eager to test an unfamiliar enemy, and they fought to the death. In the movie, Moore knows that the engagement might be a disaster, but once he gets in he doesn't much want to get out. What the movie doesn't tell us is that a third of the American forces died in the four-day battle. Its point of view is simply that a fight is a fight and never mind whether the victory is worth an enormously high casualty rate. But it does tell us all about the men who were there: their family lives, their prayers, their fears. Essentially, "We Were Soldiers" assimilates Vietnam into the Second World War; it recapitulates the many movies made in the forties and fifties which portrayed the Americans as good people fighting for a just cause. Only this time no one says what the cause is. Communism is never mentioned. Neither is China or Russia, and there's no sign of the fallible ally, the South Vietnamese. "I'm glad I can die for my country," one young soldier says, his face turning white as the life drains out of him. That unlikely line indicates what "We Were Soldiers" believes in—dying well as an American, and making a speech about it.

The movie is narrated in resolute and noble phrases by Galloway (Barry Pepper), and it sets out, in exemplary scenes, the life of ideal American warriors. The training is harsh, the leadership inspired, the wives as supportive as deeply rooted oaks. The movie appears to herald a time

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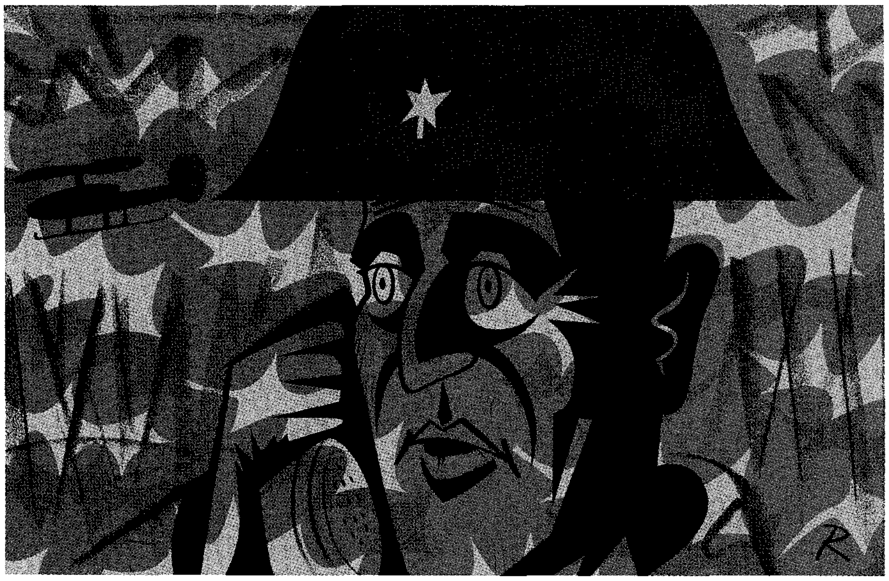
of pre-feminist obedience. Just before the men go off, the women, made up to the hilt, their hair in bouffant splendor, gather in a circle and talk of laundry; later in the movie their function is to grieve. Randall Wallace's approach to the women is unconsciously condescending, and his indifference creates one mini-disaster. As Moore's wife, Madeleine Stowe, who demonstrated a provocative streak of wildness in such movies as "Short Cuts," has been thoroughly tamed. Her lips puffed, Stowe wears her hair in drapey black tresses that make her look like an escapee from "The Addams Family," and her scenes with tough-guy Gibson die on the screen.



Mel Gibson as Lieutenant Colonel Hal Moore at the battle of Ia Drang.

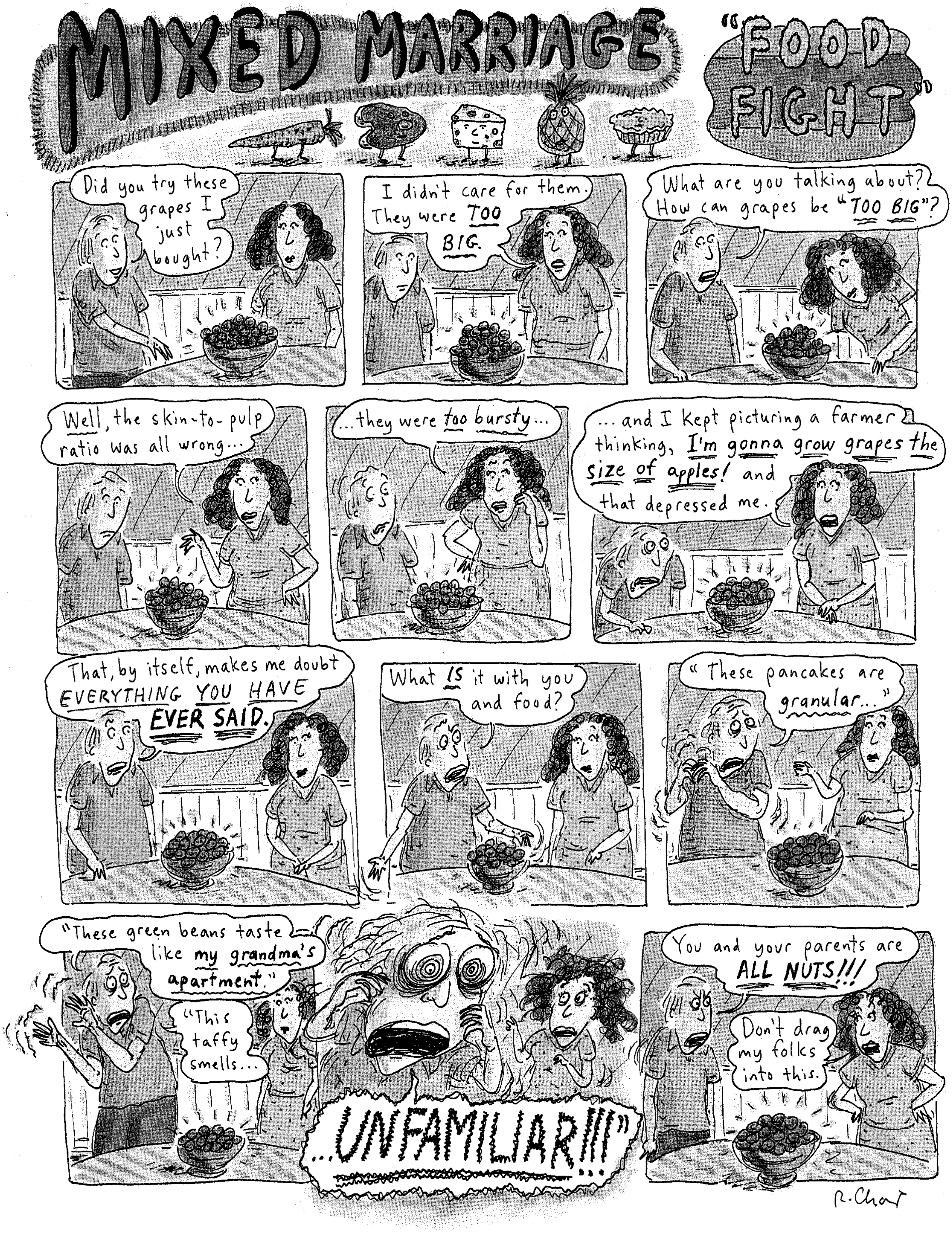
ROBERT RISKO

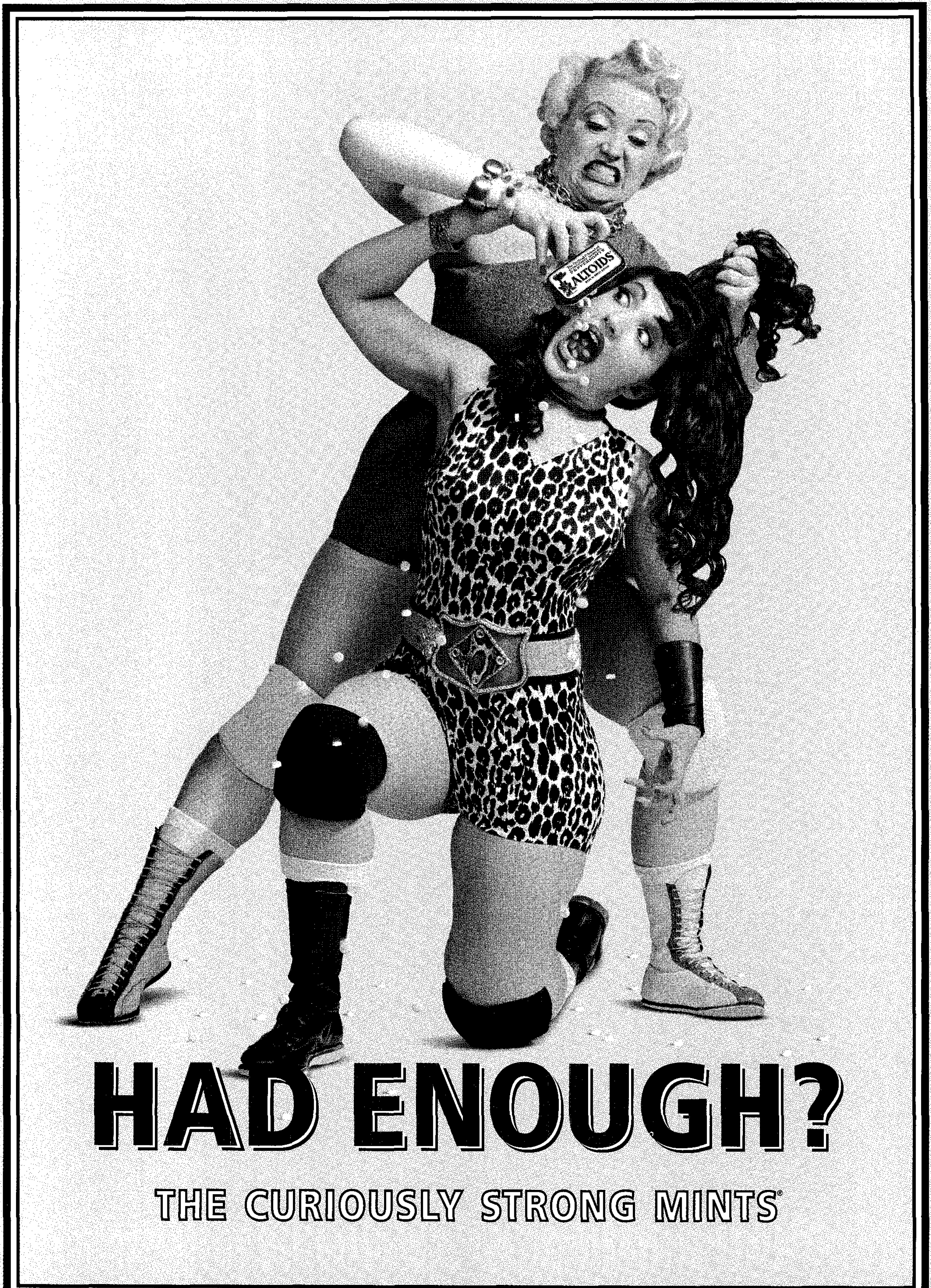
Gibson has a much more vital relationship with Sam Elliott, who plays the unit's hardtack sergeant major. Elliott, a growler, must soak his vocal cords in testosterone every night: he makes John Wayne sound like a member of the Vienna Boys' Choir. In gruff tones, he delivers one of the ripest pieces of flattery in the history of military praise. "Custer was a pussy," he says to Gibson. "You ain't." Gibson acknowledges the remark with a nod. As Moore, he's leathery but quick and alert, his eyes darting this way and that. When he runs from one part of the perimeter to another, his M-16 blazing, the movie is exciting in a rudimentary, gung-ho way. Much of the combat is staged at very close range, with masses of North Vietnamese infantry hurling themselves against American riflemen. Wallace gets the scramble and near-panic of close combat, the desperate improvisations. When the Americans are overrun, and Moore calls in an air strike that hits both American and Vietnamese troops, the fear becomes as palpable as sweat.

Yet as art this revisionist movie, grimly effective as some of it is, doesn't hold a candle to the remarkable cycle of pictures in the late seventies and the eighties which captured the discordant character of a tragic war—"The Deer Hunter," "Apocalypse Now," "Platoon," "Full Metal Jacket," and the rest. The war *was* partly redeemed by the great movies that tried to capture the essence of it. I can't think of another country that has taken on the burden of guilt more willingly in its popular art. By contrast, Wallace and Gibson wash out our minds with soap: no drugs, no civilian deaths, no night fits in *their* movie. They expunge the most unsettling parts of the war while solemnizing sacrifice and death. "We Were Soldiers" is so much in love with Hal Moore's true grit that it never acknowledges, even in passing, that the Pentagon used such capable and intelligent men to lead us into a catastrophe without parallel in American history.

The actor Josh Hartnett has sweet, boyishly handsome features, a friendly, earnest manner, and a voice that barely rises above a whisper. Modesty in a good-looking young man can be attractive, but Hartnett needs to develop a screen personality that rises above a whisper if he's going to become a star. In the sex comedy "40 Days and 40 Nights," he initially seems to be the right actor to play Matt, a San Francisco Web designer from a Catholic family who gets dumped by his glamorous girlfriend and undergoes so much unease with other women that he decides to swear off sex for the period of Lent—forty days and forty nights. In Matt's office, the situation is regarded as hilarious, and everyone becomes obsessed with it: people place bets on which day Matt will fall off the wagon. The men talk about him all the time, and the women try to seduce him. When poor Matt meets a saucy new girl, Erica (Shannyn Sossamon), he backs away from her, then changes course and makes friends only to back away again. His eyes brimming with terror, tripping and falling all over the place, Hartnett throws himself into the performance physically. Matt goes crazy with shame and lust, and some of Hartnett's corkscrew desperation is funny. But the director, Michael Lehmann, allows Hartnett to repeat himself a lot, perhaps because the screenwriter, Robert Perez, hasn't written enough for the character. It's not so much sex that Matt seems eager to avoid as it is speech. Who *is* this guy? Hartnett, for all his conniptions, doesn't pull anything distinctive out of himself, and after a while Matt just seems unformed—a dope who committed himself to a meaningless stunt that he can't get out of. All of which leaves a big vacuum at the center of the movie, since, except for Matt and Erica, everyone in sight is a colossal jerk. The men are losers, the women are slutty, and they all come off as drooling voyeurs. Although "40 Days and 40 Nights" is set among allegedly hip San Francisco people in their twenties, the sensibility of the movie is naggingly adolescent—less erotic than squeamish and giggly. Two of the producers, Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner, of the successful English company Working Title, made their reputations with such smart romantic comedies as "Four Weddings and a Funeral," "Notting Hill," and "Bridget Jones's Diary." How could they have agreed to produce a script as infantile as this one? Did they assume that an American audience would never accept American characters with brains? ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY ROZ CHAST


MIXED MARRIAGE
"FOOD FIGHT"
Did you try these grapes I just bought?
I didn't care for them. They were TOO BIG.
What are you talking about? How can grapes be "TOO BIG"?
Well, the skin-to-pulp ratio was all wrong...
...they were too bursty...
...and I kept picturing a farmer thinking, I'm gonna grow grapes the size of apples! and that depressed me.
That, by itself, makes me doubt EVERYTHING YOU HAVE EVER SAID.
What IS it with you and food?
"These pancakes are granular..."
"These green beans taste like my grandma's apartment."
"This taffy smells...
...UNFAMILIAR!!!"
You and your parents are ALL NUTS!!!
Don't drag my folks into this.
R. Chast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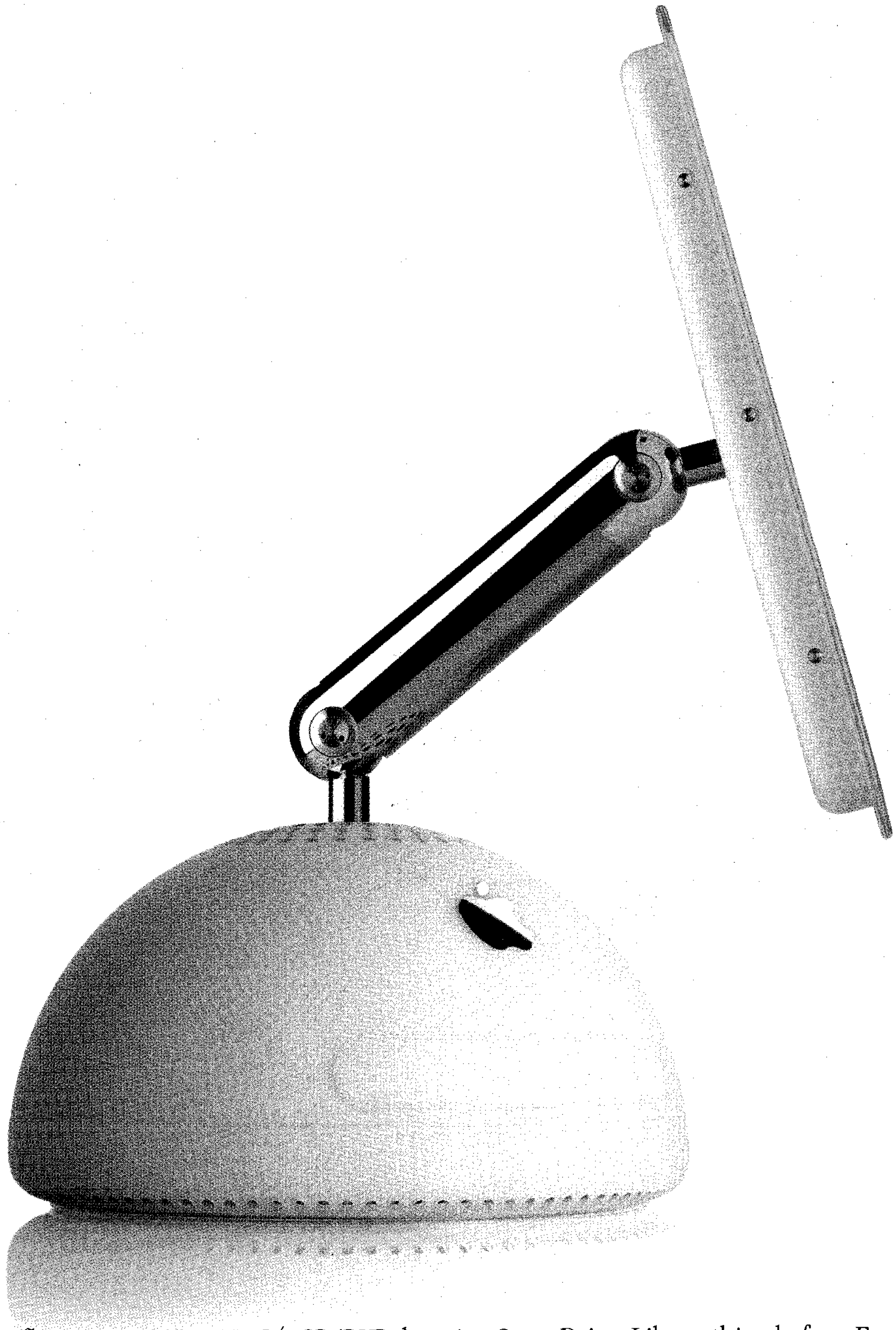

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